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Female Students' Experiences in an Old Testament Bible Course at a Christian University

Janet K. Puls
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Walden University

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

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Janet K. Puls

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2010

ABSTRACT

Female Students' Experiences in an Old Testament Bible Course
at a Christian University

by

Janet K. Puls

M.S.W., Saint Louis University, 1999

B.A., Maryville University, 1997

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Psychology

Walden University
February 2011

ABSTRACT

Previous research has shown that 80% of college students have reported they are interested in spirituality. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of female students while studying Old Testament scriptures as part of their required liberal arts curriculum and to describe how their experiences affected their lives, spiritually or in other ways. While there is a small but growing body of survey data about students' interest in spirituality, a gap exists regarding how or in what ways required biblical curriculum affects students spiritually at Christian liberal arts universities. Fowler's faith stages, Gibson's model for spiritual development, and Thayer's spirituality scales, derived from learning theory, provided the conceptual framework and guided the interpretation of findings. Thirteen female students, the class professor, and his classroom manager participated in face-to-face interviews. The constant comparative method was used for content analysis to identify, code, and group meaningful statements into salient themes and organize them into 5 primary domains. Students reported the study of scriptures increased their faith in and spiritual connection to God, helped them internalize and articulate their Christian beliefs, and eased their transition into college, because they applied biblical lessons to their everyday lives. The results of this study have implications for positive social change by adding to the knowledge of spirituality in Christian higher education. At the student level, the implications for social change are positive attitude and lifestyle changes, improved relationships with family, and having meaning and purpose in life. At the institutional level, the results provide insight for developing effective curriculum that meets the needs and expectations of students, which can lead to greater student retention and persistence to graduation.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Rosetta, whom God called home only a few months before its completion. Although her health had been seriously failing for the past 6 years, she never stopped praying for me and wanted to live long enough to see me complete my Ph.D. God granted her desire but not in the way we expected. Mom had a dream 4 weeks before she suffered her life-ending stroke and she “saw” me on stage receiving my doctorate degree, after which she asked for a microphone so she could say a few words about her daughter. Upon receiving a microphone, she awarded me “the very special daughter” award because of the “countless hours” I spent taking care of her. I had the honor and privilege of serving as her primary caregiver during the last 6 years of her life—6 years I cherish.

Thank you God for my mother, my spiritual role model, and the promise of seeing her again someday!

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Entry into the 21st century ushered in an “explosion of ‘spiritual seeking’” (Marler & Hadaway, 2002, p. 289) among Americans. Researchers have found a deep yearning to grow spiritually among adults in general; college students, in particular, believe both religion and spirituality are important in their everyday lives (Gallup & Johnson, 2003; Perez, 2006). Sweet (1999) referred to this heightened interest as a spiritual tsunami where there is longing to know the Christian God not just merely to know about God. Although most Americans currently believe spirituality and religiosity are not exactly the same construct, the majority believe the two relate to each other in inextricable ways (Marler & Hadaway).

There is nothing purely objective or neutral to the understandings or definitions of spirituality (Bender, 2007; Johnson, 1989). The word spirituality has Latin and Greek roots by combining *spiritus* (breath) and *enthousiasmos* (the god within) (Oxford, 2007). While there are no commonly agreed upon definitions of spirituality (Wilding, May, & Muir-Cochrane, 2005), it has been described as a “subjective experience of the sacred” (Vaughan, 1991, p. 105). According to Roof (1999), the definition of spirituality may be elusive but the phenomenon is real. From the evangelical Christian perspective, “the ultimate concern is God revealed in Jesus Christ and experienced through the gift of the Holy Spirit . . . one is dealing with Christian spirituality” (Schneiders, 1990, p. 23). Austad (2010) also defined Christian spirituality as a “gift of the Holy Spirit” (p. 8). This definition was the guiding perspective of the current study. Evangelical Christians believe

spirituality is biblical spirituality and has been such throughout history (Austad, 2010; Holmes, 1980). Christians believe spirituality is foundational to becoming a Christian and for the Holy Spirit to transform lives (Cameron, 2006; Johnson, 1989).

Higher education in the United States has roots in Christianity and biblical ideas (Ma, 1999; Marsden, 1994). The Church greatly influenced the founding of universities during the Middle Ages. By the Reformation era, a belief that every person should have the right to read scripture and interpret them for themselves stirred interest in higher education (De Jong, 1990). By the 17th century, perceptions of spirituality began to settle around the subjective interior life of Christians (Schneiders, 1990).

Liberal arts education and Christianity share historical roots with a theological connection. By the end of World War II, public universities sprang up and supplanted the emphasis on faith and learning within higher education in favor of pluralism and secularism (De Jong, 1990). In the latter part of the 20th century, there was renewed interest and zeal toward the intentional integration of faith and learning at Christian colleges and universities (Council for Christian Colleges & Universities [CCCCU], 2010). This renewed integration, grounded in the belief that studying scripture is an indispensable element of spiritual self-care, promotes a healthy understanding of self-worth as one seeks to find meaning and purpose in life and spirituality becomes an integrally woven component of one's perception of self (Collins, 2005).

Definition of Terms

The Christian God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

The Christian God exists in three distinct persons, God the Father, God the Son Jesus Christ, and God the Holy Spirit (1 John 5:7 New International Version, 1984;

Ridolfi, 2005). God the Father is omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscience, and is the creator of the universe (Youngblood, 1995). Jesus is the Messiah, or Savior, and Christians believe by accepting Jesus as Savior and repenting their sins, they experience a spiritual rebirth, are born-again, and have the promise of life in heaven after death (Ma, 1999). The Holy Spirit is the “Breath of God” (Cameron, 2006, p. 86) and reveals Jesus Christ to believers through faith, teaches and imparts spiritual wisdom, especially through the reading of scriptures, and admonishes or convicts of wrongdoing. The Holy Spirit comforts and guides Christians in their daily Christian walk in life as they strive to be Christ-like in all things (Karasu, 2006).

The Christian Bible

The Christian Bible includes the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament consists of 39 books; the New Testament has 27 books. Christians believe God inspired these writings and are the inerrant Word of God. The Old Testament is the historical record of God’s dealings with ancient Israel, their genealogies, stories, poems, and the prophetic messages of the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ the Son of God. The New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies and chronicles of the life of Jesus and his teachings to the concluding Book of Revelation, the prophetic scripture of future events. Unless otherwise noted, when participants in this research project shared their experiences while studying scriptures in an academic setting, they referred to the Old Testament scriptures. Unless otherwise specified, quoted scriptures in this manuscript are taken from the New International Version.

Christian Spirituality

Christians believe the Bible “is the source and standard for Christian spirituality” (Austad, 2010, p. 12) and gift by the Holy Spirit. When individuals perceive their spirituality as “God revealed in Jesus Christ and experienced through the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Schneiders, 1990, p. 23), it is Christian spirituality. It is both an inner and outer experience, manifested in self-transcendence as well as the lived and observable experiences of believers (Austad; Wommack, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

The research problem addressed in this study was the gap in phenomenological data about college students’ spiritual experiences while studying the Old Testament scriptures as part of their required curriculum at an evangelical Christian liberal arts university.

Background of the Problem

Student enrollment on religiously affiliated institutions has increased nearly three-fold to that of public and private institutions (National Council of Education Statistics [NCES], 2004), and although student development has interested researchers for decades, empirical findings on students’ spirituality and spiritual growth within higher education, especially Christian institutions, remain limited (Astin et al., 2004b; Birkholz, 1994; Lindholm, 2004; Ma, 1999). Few researchers have looked at what specific college courses, activities, or experiences influence college students’ spiritual development (Moran, 2004). Within Christian institutions of higher learning, students’ spiritual development is, at the very least, implied in their purpose or mission statements (CCCU, 2010). Thus, Christian institutions placing high priority on the spiritual growth of

students, regardless of the students' programs of study, have a unique responsibility to value spiritual, intellectual, and social development equally (Birkholz, 1994).

Tisdell (2001) suggested spiritual development should become a priority and integrated into all higher education institutions and their community of learners, offering students the opportunity to not only grow intellectually, personally, and socially, but also spiritually through curriculum. From Tisdell's perspective, it is a key component for student growth and transformation and easily integrated through instruction and classroom activities to nurture the human soul. Spiritual development implies some kind of change occurs, moving along on a continuum to a more mature but complex sense of being (Meehan, 2002). Meehan encouraged the inclusion of reading and reflecting on various sacred texts, including the Bible, because such activities raise awareness of the human condition while enabling students to search for meaning and truth in their personal experiences. Students' lived experiences, framed in the backdrop of Bible history, help them recognize they are not only spiritual but also historical. As they reflect on the past, they become aware they "live within a flow of time in a finite world in which the one constant is change" (Holmes, 1980, p. 2). Oden (1995) suggested regular scripture reading, group accountability, personal prayer, and one's work or vocation are four important elements of spiritual formation. Parks (1991) argued the ultimate purpose of higher education is to help students make meaning of their lives. Likewise, others have suggested students' spirituality could play a pivotal role in developing a lifelong love of learning and as such, colleges and universities should openly support the spiritual development of students by actively promoting it on their campuses (Duff, 2003; Lewis, 2000; Love, 2001).

Students tend to enter the college environment with perceptions of God as well as perceptions of their own spiritual development (Moran, 2004). The Christian Bible, from here on referred to as Bible, promotes the nurturing of the mind, body, and spirit (Karasu, 2006). Christians believe spirituality is both an inner and outward experience, involving the whole person in relationship with Jesus Christ (Austad, 2010; Wommack, 2010). While all of the early colleges and universities were rooted in this biblical principle, Christian institutions are likely the ones to promote this worldview into the 21st century (Boyer, 1987; Marsden, 1994).

Researchers have indicated there is a deep yearning to grow spiritually and that 70% of college students believe religion plays an important-to-very important role in their lives (Gallup & Johnson, 2003; Perez, 2006; Sweet, 1999). College students have also reported spiritual growth during their college experience (Astin et al., 2000a; 2004b; Lindholm, 2004). The exponential growth in student enrollment reported on religiously affiliated campuses (NCES, 2004) suggests college students are seeking ways to grow spiritually within an environment that integrates faith and learning.

If students report they are actively seeking to grow spiritually and are choosing more often to attend religiously affiliated institutions over public and private ones, Christian colleges and universities may be offering students opportunities to grow spiritually. A review of the literature revealed few studies, especially on Christian campuses, that have tried to investigate how specific activities such as college environment, coursework, clubs, events, or chapel services during the college experience affect the spiritual growth of students (Holcomb & Nonneman, 2004; McGee, Nagel & Moore, 2003; Moran, 2004). Although students have reported classroom experiences or

theology and Bible classes have affected them spiritually (Birkholz, 1994; Ma, 1999; Morris, Beck, & Smith, 2004) the attempt to uncover studies exploring how or in what ways studying the Bible as part of a required liberal arts curriculum affected students' lives yielded no current research.

To gain membership in the CCCU (2010), liberal arts schools must integrate faith and learning and require students to take a minimum of six credit hours in biblical and Christian focused courses. As such, I focused on the experiences of students enrolled in an Old Testament History course at Missouri Baptist University (MBU), a member of CCCU. To meet its six credit hour requirement, MBU requires all undergraduate students to take Old Testament and New Testament survey courses. The Old Testament became the chosen course of interest for this study because MBU reported enrollment was primarily first-semester freshmen students and no empirical evidence existed about how studying the Bible in an academic setting may have affected their lives as new college students, spiritually or in other ways.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore 18-22 year-old female students' experiences when studying the Old Testament Bible as part of their required curriculum at a liberal arts evangelical Christian university and to describe how or in what ways their experiences affected their lives, spiritually or in other ways. The primary source of data came from face-to-face interviews with 13 individual female students enrolled in the largest day section of the Old Testament History, the teacher of the course, and his classroom manager. In keeping with the phenomenological tradition of inquiry, prevailing themes or patterns were identified from the students' personal

experiences and organized into dominate domains or categories along with supporting themes.

Research Questions

Central Research Question

Within the phenomenological tradition, this study explored and discovered answers to the following central research question:

How and in what ways did studying the Old Testament Bible in a course at a liberal arts evangelical Christian university affect female students' spiritual development?

Subresearch Questions

To aid in the exploration of the central research question, I also explored and discovered answers to the following subquestions:

1. How did female students perceive their personal experiences as they related to the Bible course knowing they had to take it as part of their graduation requirement?
2. Did studying the Bible in a structured academic setting affect the female students' lives in other ways?
3. Were there any in-class or out-of-class activities or experiences throughout the term that particularly stood out for the female students as having an affect on them spiritually or in other ways?

The central research question and subquestions provided the framework for developing the Student Interview Protocol form (Appendix A), which guided the semistructured interviews. Appendix B provides demographic characteristics of the student participants.

Overview of the Conceptual Framework

Phenomenological researchers often frame and interpret their data from a broader philosophical perspective. The conceptual framework for this study was built on the following 3 perspectives: (a) Fowler's (1981) structural-developmental framework for the stages of faith, (b) Gibson's (2004) model for spiritual development, derived from Kohlberg's (1981) theory of moral reasoning; and (c) Thayer's (1996) spirituality scales, based on Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory.

Stages of Faith

A cornerstone of Christian spirituality is having faith that God is revealed through Jesus Christ, God's son (Karasu, 2010). Equally important is the belief the Holy Spirit transforms lives (Schneiders, 1990). Fowler (1981) suggested, "faith, then, is an active mode of knowing. . . . [it] is our way of discerning and committing ourselves to centers of value and power that exert ordering force in our lives" (p. 24-25). Fowler built his seminal work on the stages of faith from Erikson's (1968) psychosocial, Piaget's (1971) cognitive, and Kohlberg's (1981) moral reasoning theories. Holcomb and Nonneman (2004) considered Fowler's model a viable component for a conceptual framework to explore and understand the complexities of students' spirituality while recognizing and appreciating the diversity and richness of their faith. Chapter 2 will present a more thorough discussion of Fowler's framework and the link between spirituality and faith.

Moral Development

The Christian story, as recorded in the Bible, is replete with moral and ethical teachings to guide believers and orient individuals on their Christian journey throughout life (Johnson, 1989). Derived from Kohlberg's (1981) theory of moral reasoning, Gibson

(2004) developed a stage model for spiritual maturity grounded in a Christian worldview, positing an inextricable link between moral development and spirituality. According to Gibson's model, as individuals mature spiritually they progress from level one, which is a state of actions guided by perceived rewards and punishment, to level four in which they act upon internalized values and principles. Chapter 2 will provide a discussion of Gibson's stages of spiritual maturity and their link to moral development.

Experiential Learning

Kolb (1984) developed an experiential learning model suggesting, "knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (p. 41). In other words, individuals' experiences establish their foundation for learning. Within Kolb's model, transforming experiences involves grasping the concrete, or one's immediate experiences, as well as abstract experiences occurring through symbolic interaction with others. While reading and meditating on scripture, Christians believe the Holy Spirit enlightens and reveals God's word. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, scriptures become personally meaningful and help give direction in life to change behaviors, guide day-to-day decisions, and instill the desire to help others (Miller, 1997). A discussion on Kolb's experiential model, its four adaptive modes of learning, and the link to spirituality within higher education and Thayer's (1996) spirituality scales, built on Kolb's theory, is in chapter 2.

Significance of the Study

Gallup and Johnson (2003) reported a yearning to grow spiritually among adults in the United States. Perez (2006) found 70% of college students believe religion plays an important-to-very important role in their lives and 25% of the college students reported

they grew spiritually during their college years. Within one's spiritual values is the foundation for the pursuit of purpose and meaning in life as well as valuing human relationships, expectations for a just society, adopting ethical standards, and assuming moral responsibility (Grimmitt, 1994; Parks, 1991). This yearning to grow spiritually and find purpose and meaning in life is why religiously affiliated campuses have had more than double the growth in enrollment over public and private institutions (NCES, 2004).

The typical undergraduate college degree now takes students anywhere from 4-to-6 years to complete. During this time, students encounter countless experiences from which they learn and grow academically as well as personally. Christians believe studying the Bible is an indispensable element of spiritual self-care and promotes a healthy understanding of self-worth as one seeks to find meaning and purpose in life (Collins, 2005); but spirituality is a subjectively experienced phenomenon (Vaughan, 1991). Before one can understand students' spiritual growth as it relates to the college experience as a whole, it is necessary to conduct studies and explore specific experiences, such as those during a required Bible course, that encourage students to delve deeper into the human soul and develop their spiritual lives. Traditional quantitative survey data cannot reveal such insights.

A unique facet of liberal arts Christian education is all undergraduate students are required to complete a certain number of hours of biblical studies in order to graduate with a degree (CCCU, 2010). The results of this study will begin to fill the gap in the literature by revealing how students personally experienced studying the Bible in a required academic setting and how or in what ways knowledge of the Bible affected their lives, spiritually or in other ways. As such, with the reported increase in enrollment on

Christian campuses, the results of this study should be of interest to administrators on these types of campuses, especially as they assess their curriculum to determine how it is meeting the needs of their students and fulfilling their missions or goals as providers of Christian higher education.

Social Change Implications

Birkholz (1994) reported that Christian college students viewed spirituality as an indispensable element of their lives and something at the essence of their being. Focusing on spirituality within higher education is valuable because “its connection to the development and growth of the learner is present in the learning process itself” (Tolliver & Tisdell, 2006, p. 45). Because spirituality deals with a subjectively experienced phenomenon, personal experience and analogy enhances and illuminates understanding (Schneiders, 1990). Christians believe as their faith develops, and they internalize as well as take ownership of the scriptures, they experience positive transformation (Neal, 1998). Erricker (2003) referred to a spiritual citizenship that requires mature introspection, spiritually and morally, as a way to effect positive social change. For evangelical Christians, the Bible is replete with faith-building examples for how the study of scriptures can reveal purpose and meaning in life (Johnson, 1989).

It is common for Christian colleges and universities to have mission statements and core purposes that point to holistically developing their students. To achieve such aspirations, it is important to not only identify what but also understand why and how required Bible curriculum contributes to students’ spiritual development (Moran, 2004) and to reveal whether or not they are internalizing and taking personal ownership of what they are required to study (Neal, 1998).

The results of this study have implications for positive social change by adding to the small but growing knowledge of spirituality in higher education at a time when there is a surge in spiritual seeking among Americans and tremendous enrollment growth on evangelical Christian campuses (Marler & Hadaway, 2002; NCES, 2004). More specifically, the results of this study have provided insight for administrators and teachers involved in liberal arts Christian higher education as to the potential value and effectiveness of how required biblical studies affect the spiritual development of their students. College students are purposefully choosing to attend Christian institutions (NCES, 2004). The increased knowledge gained from this study will help inform curriculum development and meet the needs and expectations of the students, which can have positive rippling effects. For instance, when freshman students saw themselves as having a spiritual fit within the Christian institution they were attending, they reported experiencing an overall positive first-year experience (Morris et al., 2004). The spiritual-fit integration successfully predicted retention of students who would return to the same college for their sophomore year. Student retention leads to greater degree completion, which allows graduates to be more successful in their vocation and personal lives as well as having greater potential for effecting positive social change in their own communities.

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions

The most crucial assumption made for this study was participants would perceive their experiences during the required Bible course as activities promoting their spiritual development rather than just academic exercises or busywork. I chose to interview students from a particular Bible course because the requirement to take a certain number

of courses in biblical studies is unique to the Christian college experience. MBU (2010), the host location for this study, believes that having Bible courses as part of its degree requirements is vitally important to a holistic approach of educating students.

The university faculty and administration believe that without this foundation, a student may be well trained to perform a certain task, and yet be severely limited in ability to understand, participate in, and contribute to the cultural, social, and political milieus of the society. (p. 52)

MBU and other liberal arts evangelical Christian institutions make claim to the active integration of faith and learning (CCCU, 2010). Another assumption of this study was the results would provide some empirical evidence for the value of requiring Bible courses as part of a holistic approach to the development of students in Christian higher education. A closely related assumption involved the belief that conducting face-to-face interviews, instead of administering a paper survey, would provide richer data and bring better understanding of the students' experiences. In chapters 2 and 3, I present the rationale for selecting this method of data collection.

It was assumed participants would be relaxed, open, honest, and authentic as they shared their experiences. The next assumption was out of a class of 94 students enrolled in the day section of the Old Testament History Bible course during the fall 2008 semester (43 female, 51 male) a final sample of at least 10 traditional-college-aged female students would agree to participate in the face-to-face interviews. Finally, once participants signed the informed consent and agreed to participate in the study, it was assumed they would remain engaged throughout the research project.

Limitations

One of the primary limitations of this study was it took place at a medium-sized liberal arts evangelical Christian university in the Midwest. Due to the nature of the qualitative methodology, results from this study cannot be generalized across different populations. Another limitation of conducting this phenomenological study was that during the semester additional factors beyond the students' involvement in the 16-week Old Testament Bible class had the potential to influence their spiritual development as well as other areas of their lives. In recognizing this limitation, question number 2 on the interview protocol form gave students the opportunity to share other personal and meaningful experiences during the entire semester (see Appendix A). In chapter 3, I present techniques such as data saturation and member checking used to verify the credibility and trustworthiness of the data. The services of an external auditor provided the opportunity for triangulation, which helped to corroborate evidence and reduced researcher bias.

Participant demographics are another limitation because this study restricted volunteer participation to female college students, 18-22 years of age. Because the evangelical Christian perspective framed this study, eligibility also required participants to self-report as having a Christian religious affiliation. Participants completed a short demographics survey (Appendix B) and the results of this survey helped inform data analysis. Finally, there is no longitudinal component to this study. As bounded in time over a 16-week semester, this study does not encompass the potential effects of the students' whole college experience.

The potential for demand characteristics, such as how participation could affect the students' course grade (Burns, 2006) or the perception of being seen in a favorable light by the professor teaching the course, the researcher, or others tied to the host university should be noted as a possible limitation of the study as well. In chapter 3, I present the process used to recruit participants for this study, which helped to alleviate the possibility for such demand characteristics.

Summary

The 21st century has ushered in an era of spiritual hunger in the United States as college students have reported they developed spiritually during their college years (Marler & Hadaway, 2002; Sweet, 1999). Research is lacking as to how and in what ways specific curricular or extracurricular activities, such as required Bible courses, affected their spiritual lives (Holcomb & Nonneman, 2004; Moran, 2004).

I explored and described the experiences of 18-22-year-old undergraduate female students enrolled in the largest day section of the Old Testament History course, a course required for graduation. The central research question of this study sought to discover the essence of what it was like for the participants to study the Old Testament Bible in a required course at a liberal arts evangelical Christian university. Results of the study were analyzed within a conceptual framework that includes Fowler's (1981) Stages of Faith, Gibson's (2004) model for spiritual development, and Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, which underlies Thayer's (1996) spirituality scales.

In the following chapter, I present a review of the literature on spirituality, showing how it relates to higher education, and outline the conceptual framework for this study. In chapter 3, I present the research methodology used to conduct this study.

Results are presented in chapter 4. In chapter 5, I discuss my interpretations of the data, implications for social change, and offer recommendations for future research studies.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The literature reviewed for this study revealed a broad but growing interest in the topic of spirituality and higher education and the potential for student growth and transformation through the study of Christian Scriptures. In this chapter, I frame the concept of spirituality within the Christian perspective. I discuss various issues such as adolescents emerging into early adulthood, Christian spirituality in higher education, the spiritual diversity represented on college campuses, and the evangelical Christian beliefs. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the conceptual framework for this study and provide the rationale for conducting a phenomenological study.

Literature Review Search Strategy

Initially, the search terms used in EBSCO electronic databases (i.e. Academic Search Premier, ERIC, PsycINFO, and SocINDEX) included *spirituality, Christian spirituality, spiritual formation, spiritual growth, and spiritual development*. These terms yielded thousands of full-text articles or abstracts. Adding search terms such as *higher education, college students, university, faith, learning theory, and moral development* narrowed the results. The full-text articles I reviewed cited references, which pointed me to additional literature pertinent to the focus of this study. Utilizing the same combination of terms, a thorough search of the ProQuest Databases also provided a few dissertations dealing with the spirituality of college students. The scholarly works cited in the dissertations also provided helpful references to identify additional readings. MBUs

interlibrary loan system and the St. Louis County public library system also provided several books. Finally, the World Wide Web provided a few quality resources as well.

Spirituality

The word *spirituality* has Latin and Greek roots by combining *spiritus* (breath) and *enthousiasmos* (the god within) (Oxford, 2007). Although the definition of spirituality is elusive, it is real (Roof, 1999). Although most Americans believe spirituality and religiosity are not exactly the same construct, they tend to connect them in inextricable ways (Marler & Hadaway, 2002). Americans tend to believe religiosity represents more of the rituals and practices aligned with organized religions and doctrines whereas they consider spirituality as subjective and grounded in personal experiences of the sacred (Ellingson, 2001; Vaughan, 1991). While there is rise in individuals' self-identification as being spiritual but not religious, there is nothing objective or neutral to the understandings or definitions of spirituality (Bender, 2007; Johnson, 1989). When "the ultimate concern is God revealed in Jesus Christ and experienced through the gift of the Holy Spirit . . . one is dealing with Christian spirituality" (Schneiders, 1990, p. 23). Christians believe spirituality is biblical spirituality and it has been such throughout Christian history (Austad, 2010; Holmes, 1980). Christians believe that spirituality is at the core of becoming a Christian and for the Holy Spirit to transform lives (Cameron, 2006; Johnson, 1989).

While there is a plethora of discussions about Christian spirituality by theologians and scholars, it was not until the 1970s and early 1980s that interest took root in trying to study, understand, and integrate such a complex and subjectively experienced

phenomenon into psychological arenas of the human condition (Henning & Tirrell, 1982; Holmes, 1980; Powers, 2005). Spirituality is a basic value around which all other values are focused and is a path to the construction of knowledge (Thibault, Ellor, & Netting, 1991; Tisdell, 2001). Within one's spiritual values is the foundation for the pursuit of purpose and meaning in life as well as valuing human relationships, expectations for a just society, adopting ethical standards, and assuming moral responsibility (Grimmitt, 1994; Parks, 1991). Sawatzky, Ratner, and Chiu (2005) conducted a meta-analysis of 51 studies and found a positive relationship between spirituality and quality of life. Additional researchers showed that one's perceived spirituality affects physical and mental health, perceived stress and medication use, marital and over-all life satisfaction, and therapeutic outcomes (Astin et al., 2004b; Cole, 2005; Perrone, Webb, Wright, Jackson, & Ksiazak, 2006). Chae, Kelly, Brown, and Bolden (2004) showed a relationship between spiritual development and ethnic identity.

Helminiak (1987) offered insight into the connection between spirituality and psychology's focus on human development.

Spiritual development is human development when the latter is conceived according to a particular set of concerns: integrity or wholeness, openness, self-responsibility, and authentic self-transcendence. So spiritual development is the ongoing integration that results in the self-responsible subject from openness to an intricate principle of authentic self-transcendence. (p. 95)

Schneiders (1990) suggested that spirituality and psychology are similar because they both deal with abstract and seemingly elusive concepts but can become real and meaningful through personal experiences. According to Johnson (1989), there is a mutual dependency between psychology and theology to understand the human experience.

Helminiak (1987) suggested theism completes psychology by recognizing that God created life and spirituality in an inherent part of being human.

Adolescents to Emerging Adulthood as College Students

Industrialized societies have allowed an extended adolescent period beyond 18 years of age for exploration and role experimentation (Erikson, 1968). Arnett (2000) suggested the transition from late adolescence into emerging adulthood represents a deeper period of exploration for college students as they seek a coherent identity. With their preconceived ideas about what it means to be an adult, Barry and Nelson (2005) suggested adolescents begin to emerge into adulthood by exploring their beliefs in an attempt to expand their worldviews, but they tend to experiment with high-risk behaviors. Traditionally aged college freshman students are generally 18 or 19 years old and in the process of transitioning from late adolescence to emerging adulthood.

During adolescent years, teenagers experience a great deal of change as they deal with issues of identity and meaning making in their lives. It is an “intense time of change, where many battles for the self are won and lost” (Bruce & Cockreham, 2004, p. 336). Kessler (1997) suggested a link between the increase in high-risk behaviors among teenagers and the lack of spiritual guidance available to them. Because adolescence represents a major developmental transition, Kessler voiced concerns about global unrest and how uncertainty about the future has affected adolescent development, especially when they lack spiritual guidance.

But in times past, social and religious traditions could help teenagers to make this transition by providing a larger social and spiritual framework and sense of meaning in which to embed [their] new, separate identity. In today’s period of

global uncertainty and change, this supportive context and sense of meaning is often absent (¶ 12).

There is a limited amount of research looking at spirituality in adolescents (Benson, 2004). Sometime during adolescence, youth begin to develop their ability to think abstractly about their existence and consider that religion may have more to it than just doctrine (Markstrom, 1999). Kessler (1998) suggested that adolescents at this stage in life begin to sense an urge for transcendence in their need and desire to understand who they are and who they may become.

Fowler (1981) posited that adolescents could begin to sense a drawing to God in their need to feel accepted. He described adolescence as a time of seeing oneself through mirrors, as in the eyes and ears of those they trust the most. It is common during early-to-midadolescence for teenagers to experience a time of conformity within peer groups while at the same time struggle with authority and previously held values or beliefs (Bruce & Cockreham, 2004; Daddis, 2010). Spirituality and religious practices provide adolescents the opportunity to develop their critical thinking skills as they explore who they are and what they believe (King, 2003). Fowler described this faith stage as Synthetic-Conventional where adolescents enter Piaget's (1971) formal operational thinking stage. Toward the end of adolescence and their entrance into emerging adulthood, individuals begin to resolve the disequilibrium and personal struggles, which can bring insight and greater clarity of self, values, and faith (Arnett, 2000). Fowler referred to emerging adulthood as the Individuative-Reflective faith stage. Although adolescence is a normative developmental stressor, it represents a time of crisis for

teenagers. Bruce and Cockreham (2004) suggested when adolescents find ways to manage their emotional pain they can grow spiritually stronger.

After conducting a review of the literature on spirituality in two electronic databases, PsycINFO and Social Science Abstracts, Benson, Roehlkepartain, and Rude (2003) reported only 1% of the research addressed spirituality in adolescents and children. They found evidence of a positive association between religiosity and identity formation, attitudes, success in school, and overall well-being of adolescents as well as a negative association between religiosity and delinquent behaviors, risk taking, and drug use. Markstrom (1999) showed high school students heavily involved in church-related activities such as participation in youth groups or Bible studies perceived greater purpose and meaning in their lives.

While authentic identity and spiritual development intertwine, adolescents may be more aware of identity and relationship issues than the spiritual realm (Tolliver & Tisdell, 2006). Engebretson (2004) interviewed 20 adolescent boys in their sophomore and junior years of high school and found the students were more preoccupied with identity tasks related to interpersonal relationships and tasks needed to have adult careers instead of a transcendent dimension of life. Although the students believed prayer was an expression of spirituality, they found meaning and purpose in life through family and other important relationships in their lives.

When asked to reflect back on their adolescent years, Scott (2004) found prayer represented a form of spirituality-in-action because they perceived it as an important connection to God. Although adolescents may lack a spiritual vernacular, Scott suggested

they experience spirituality when they pray and bargain with God as a way to deal with the life's uncertainties and stressors.

Holmes (1980) and Peace (1997) also suggested that prayer is foundational to one's spiritual life. Sinats et al. (2005) reviewed written diaries of several female adolescents between 11 and 17 years of age and found that journaling and poetry writing became expressions of their spirituality. Several spiritual themes emerged in the diaries such as finding a sense of solitude, experiencing calming effects, self-care by nurturing and asserting the value of self, and sensing a connection beyond one's self.

According to Parks (1991), the early years of college for students embarking on young adulthood, especially during the traditional freshman experience, can influence their spiritual growth and development when there is group membership with strong mentorship. Adolescents transitioning from high school to college initially tend to pull further away from authority figures as they seek to solidify their own identities (Arnett, 2000). Cannister (1999) found that 18-year-old freshman students attending a Christian liberal arts college had positive changes in their emotional well-being and religiosity when they participated in mentoring-focused seminars during their first year of college as compared to other freshman students attending the same college who did not attend the seminars.

Cannister (1999) suggested the participants involved in the present study should benefit from studying scriptures in a structured supportive classroom setting. This brief review of research involving adolescents, and how they may perceive or experience spirituality, relates to and helps inform this study because it gives insight into the fluid

but critical process of development experienced by traditionally aged college students during their transition between adolescence and emerging adulthood.

The developmental process that unfolds for college students during the transition from adolescence to emerging adulthood also points to a link between spirituality and faith development and a link between spiritual maturity and moral development, which are part of this proposed study. The relevancy to the current study is discussed later in the conceptual framework section.

Spirituality and the 21st Century

Entry into the 21st century represents a boom in spiritual seeking among American adults in general (Marler & Hadaway, 2002). Sweet (1999) referred to the heightened interest as a spiritual tsunami where there is longing to know God and not merely know about God. According to Gallup and Johnson (2003), 69% of adults in the United States have a deep yearning to grow spiritually on a daily basis. Perez (2006) found 70% of college students believed religion played an important-to-very-important role in their lives. Twenty-five percent of the students also reported they grew spirituality during their college years while only 7% reported declining spirituality.

There is further evidence of a heightened interest in spirituality amongst college students with the exponential growth of evangelical student organizations such as Campus Crusade, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, and Fellowship of Christian Athletes (Mahoney, Schmalzbauer, & Youniss, 2001). Student enrollment on religiously affiliated campuses has also increased 70% between 1990 and 2004 whereas private and public institutions grew 28% and 13% respectively (NCES, 2004). During the past few decades,

dozens of Christian and evangelical professional groups have sprung up representing various disciplines from biology, mathematics, and engineering, to library science, psychology, counseling, and social work (Bowling Green, 2000). Membership in professional organizations such as the Christian Association for Psychological Studies (CAPS, 2010), North American Association of Christians in Social Work (NACSW, 2010), and the American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC, 2010) has growing appeal to college students as well. These organizations provide peer support and resources to integrate their Christian faith with learning and professional practice more effectively, while offering greatly reduced membership fees for student members.

Higher Education and Christian Spirituality

In 2003, the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) began a multiyear study looking at undergraduate students' spiritual development, releasing its first round of survey data from 112,232 first-year students across the United States (Astin et al., 2004a; 2004b). Results indicated that 80% of students were interested in spirituality, 76% viewed themselves as actively searching for meaning and purpose in the lives, and 64% reported that spirituality was a source of joy in their lives. Approximately 47% believed it was essential or very important to seek out ways to grow spiritually. Fifty-five percent of students measuring high in spirituality reported they were "frequently able to find meaning in times of hardship" as compared to only 11% of students who measured low in spirituality and 58% of students measuring high in perceived spirituality "frequently felt at peace/centered" (p. 13). The largest proportion of students, 28%, indicated their religious preference was Roman Catholic while 17% chose None, 13% indicated they

were Baptist, and 11% selected Other Christian. There were small percentages of Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, and Church of Christ and even smaller percentages of such religious preferences as Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Islamic, and Latter-Day Saints. The results of this national longitudinal study offer macro evidence to the importance that college students in the 21st century are placing on spiritual growth. It also provides support for why it is important to explore the topic on a micro level as presented in the current study.

Christian Roots

Higher education in the United States has historical roots in Christianity and biblical ideals (Ma, 1999; Marsden, 1994). The Christian Church's interest in education grew during the Reformation era, driven by the belief that every person should have the right to read and interpret Christian Scriptures for themselves (De Jong, 1990). Around the 17th century, perceptions of spirituality began to settle around the subjective interior life of Christians (Schneiders, 1990). Hollinger (2001) expressed concerns that postmodern concepts of spirituality have influenced students attending Christian colleges and universities, which could result in fragmented spiritualities where one's thoughts and actions are not consistent with biblical principles. There is also a sentiment that although interest in spirituality continues to increase, students in the 21st century are still more likely to meet with a barrage of messages to develop their earning power and measure life by accumulated possessions rather than to contemplate their purpose and meaning in life (Astin, 2004). Sardello (1992) expressed concerns that the held purpose of education into

the 21st century will likely continue to equate to material gain while neglecting spiritual development.

Education instead has become an institution whose purpose in the modern world is not to make culture, not to serve the living cosmos, but to harness humankind to the dead forces of materialism. Education as we know it, from preschool through graduate school, damages the soul. (p. 50)

Sweet (1999) pointed out societies have long known that wealth and material gain fall short of bringing real contentment and meaning in life if the spiritual realm is not

College Student Growth and Transformation

Tisdell (2001) suggested that spiritual development should become a priority and integrated into higher education institutions and their community of learners. From Tisdell's perspective, it is a key component for student growth and transformation, which could easily be integrated through instruction or classroom activities as well extracurricular activities that nurture the human soul. De Souza (2003) agreed that education has a responsibility to help students tap into their inner lives, develop spiritually, and find ways to express it. Parks (1991) argued the purpose of higher education is to help students make meaning of their lives. Likewise, others have suggested that students' spirituality could play a pivotal role in developing a lifelong love of learning and as such, colleges and universities should openly support the spiritual development of students by actively promoting it in various ways throughout campus life (Duff, 2003; Lewis, 2000; Love, 2001).

Curriculum and the Study of the Scriptures

Along with addressing both cognitive and affective domains, Hollinger (2001) included sharing the faith through Christian outreach as part of a balanced 3-dimensional

approach to helping college students develop spiritually. As faith and learning are interdependent, cognition serves a vital role in the formation of Christian spirituality by helping students to discern biblical truths and learn how to apply the lessons to their everyday lives (De Jong, 1990; Hollinger, 2001).

Spiritual development implies that some kind of change occurs, moving one along a continuum to a more mature but complex sense of being (Meehan, 2002). Higher education should not only provide students the opportunity to grow intellectually, personally, and socially, but also spiritually through its curriculum. Meehan encouraged the inclusion of reading and reflecting on various sacred texts such as the Bible because they raise awareness of the human condition while enabling students' search for meaning and truth in their personal experiences. Students' lived experiences framed in the backdrop of Bible history help them recognize they are not only spiritual but also historical. As they reflect on the past, they become aware that they "live within a flow of time in a finite world in which the one constant is change" (Holmes, 1980, p. 2). Oden (1995) posited that regular scripture reading, group accountability, personal prayer, and one's work or vocation make up four important elements in spiritual formation.

Schneiders (1990) suggested that spirituality indeed involves the study of traditions, scripture, and other historical texts. The study of scriptures in an academic setting could easily result in a

"spiritual experience" to indicate that the subject matter is not only religious experience in the technical sense but those analogous experiences of ultimate meaning and value which have transcendent and life-giving power for individuals and groups. (p. 31)

From their research on contemporary college campuses during the 1990s, Levine and Cureton (1998) suggested that college students in the United States would benefit greatly from curriculum that included the history of humanity, giving them sufficient opportunities to apply critical thinking skills and good wholesome values. The country of Great Britain has recognized the value of integrating spirituality and education at an early age and although the nation is not promoting a rigid perspective of spirituality, in 1988 it passed the Educational Reform Act (Duff, 2003). This legislation requires the integration of spiritual development into curriculum for all school-aged children to promote aspects of spirituality such as awareness, self-knowledge, and transcendence. Great Britain believes a key role of education is “to cultivate an intelligence born of an atmosphere that allows children the freedom to face the world, understand it and not just conform to it” (Duff, 2003, p. 227). The Holy Bible instructs Christians to not conform to the world but undergo transformation by the renewal of the mind (Romans 12:2). The British children who first experienced the integration of spirituality and the new curriculum would now be among currently enrolled college students, 18-22 years old.

The Spiritual Diversity of College Students

Spiritual experiences derived religiously and culturally, could leave college students with differing expectations about what constitutes a spiritual experience. It is reasonable to suggest that students attending an institution with denominational connections would perceive religious and spiritual practices more similarly to each other than students attending a secular campus where greater diversity in Christian and non-Christian faiths abound. For instance, a male from around the Amazon River area

considered it a spiritual experience when his grandparent ceremonially removed his spirit from his body and placed it in a tree for a while so he would know what it meant to be a tree (Scott, 2004).

The identity of being God's chosen people is at the core of Jewish spirituality; whereas, Islamic spirituality is expressed in solidarity with all fellow believers during five daily prayer times and further strengthened by their reflection on nature (Fairak & Rao, 2005; King, 2003). Hindu students ascribing to Sahaj Marg perceive spirituality as a "notion of divine light or presence within the heart augmented within direct transmission of a divine current called pranahuti (Pearmain, 2005, p. 279). Within Sahaj Marg, the spiritual practices of meditation, prayer, and deep cleaning of the mind by a spiritual Master, the one who transmits spiritual energy into the believer, is believed to be the path to human perfection (Sahaj, 2004). Self-awareness is also central to Hindu spirituality (Hodge, 2004).

Christians equate spirituality with having a personal relationship with Christ and believe they can experience transcendence through various means such as engaging in personal prayer, meditating on God's word, or partaking of Holy Communion. According to Mutei (2007), while Christians believe the Holy Bible is infallible, Muslims believe much of it is corrupt. Muslims believe the *Qur'an* is the actual word of God and they use some Bible Scriptures as their proof the *Qur'an* holds the ultimate truth. Muslims and Jews alike believe Jesus Christ was a prophet but not the incarnate of God.

For Christian institutions of higher learning, students' spiritual development is important and they incorporate ways to promote Christian character and godly leaders

(Ma, 1999; Moran, 2004). Christian spiritual formation involves a life-long process of transforming one's self to be more like Christ and to seek out and fulfill his purposes (Ma, 1999).

The Evangelical Christian Perspective

During Old Testament events, perceptions of spirituality were primarily speculative and practiced in synagogues through recitation of scriptures and prayer (Holmes, 1980). For instance, reading and reflecting on the scriptures brought about D'ath, a knowing deep within the soul that moved believers to embrace mysticism and belief in God and his provisions as well as have hope in the prophetic proclamations of the coming Christ (Holmes). The fulfillment of prophesy in the New Testament with the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ led to the concept of Christian spirituality, which is manifested through the Son of God, Jesus Christ, and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Schneiders, 1990).

Liberal arts education and Christianity have historical roots with a theological connection, but the emphasis on faith and learning within higher education was lost when public universities sprang up by the end of World War II along with the birth of pluralism and secularism (De Jong, 1990). The latter part of the 20th century found Christian colleges and universities with renewed interest and zeal toward an intentional integration of faith and learning. CCCU (2010), formally named Christian Coalition, exists for just such purposes.

The CCCU (2010) reported having record growth in membership and affiliate institutions over the past 30 years, starting with 38 member institutions in the United

States and growing to 184 institutions in 24 countries, representing 29 denominations. CCCU predicted record growth in the number of college students enrolling in sponsored cross-cultural and Christ-centered educational programs around the world (2009). The mission of CCCU is “to advance the cause of Christ-centered higher education and to help our institutions transform lives by faithfully relating scholarship and service to biblical truth” (p. 1). To qualify for full membership, institutions must be dedicated to Christ-centered education, offer strong liberal arts curriculum, and employ only professing Christians for faculty and staff positions. It is common for Christian colleges and universities to have mission statements and core purposes that point to holistically developing their students (CCCU, 2010). To achieve such aspirations, it is imperative for colleges and universities to identify what curriculum or types of activities are meaningful and effective in developing students spiritually (Moran, 2004).

Evangelical Beliefs

Moran (2004) suggested that students tend to enter the college environment with perceptions of God as well as perceptions of their own spiritual development. The Bible promotes nurturing the mind, body, and spirit (Karasu, 2006). Evangelical Christians believe that spirituality involves having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and is an inner and outward experience (Austad, 2010; Wommack, 2010). While all of the early colleges and universities were built on this biblical principle, only Christian institutions are likely to promote this worldview into the 21st century (Boyer, 1987; Marsden, 1994).

Although evangelical Christians represent a diverse group of denominational faiths, they all tend to uphold certain foundational principles. First, evangelicals believe

in the Holy Trinity of God the Father, God the Son Jesus Christ, and God the Holy Spirit. Salvation cannot be earned but freely given through personal acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior, believing that God sent His Son to earth who was born of a virgin, died on the cross, was resurrected, and sits at God the Father's right hand. Acceptance of Jesus Christ is a transformational experience, which evangelical Christians refer to as being *born-again*; there is regeneration and new life for the believer through the Holy Spirit (Ma, 1999). Second, the evangelical tradition is "founded on the living Word of God, the written Word of God, and the proclaimed Word of God" (Foster, 1998, p. 233) as the infallible and the ultimate authoritative source of truth for believers. Finally, evangelical Christians believe they are personally responsible to share their faith and lead others to accept Christ so they too can experience the spiritual rebirth (Bryant, 2005; 2007a).

Evangelical Students

There are multiple ways for students to describe themselves as evangelical Christians. According to Birkholz (1994), students have a clear understanding of what it means to be evangelical in their beliefs. "It is that evangelical Christianity is theological in its character, biblical in its substance, original in its history, and fundamental in its emphasis. This is what students mean when they describe themselves as evangelicals" (p. 255).

Evangelical Christian students, whether attending a secular or sectarian college or university, tend to be conservative, support traditional beliefs about covenant marriage, support the pro-life agenda, and uphold strong Christian morality (Bryant, 2005; 2007a). Evangelical Christians deal with the same social ills of abuse, addiction, emotional

problems, physical health issues, and economic challenges as everyone else (Focus on the Family, 2010; Roof, 1999). Researchers believe that because of the diversity of students attending Christian campuses and the postmodern influences of relativism, biblical truths should remain the cornerstone of student development (Holcomb & Nonneman, 2004; Sardello, 1992). The act of learning truths is not what changes lives. Change occurs and faith is born as one discovers truth for him or herself (Moran, 2004).

From the evangelical Christian perspective, the study of scripture reveals life's truths and serves as a conduit to knowing God and his ways as well as knowing oneself (Duff, 2003; Wanak, 2004). Spirituality becomes an integrally woven component of one's perception of self. Christians believe studying scripture is an indispensable element of spiritual self-care that promotes a healthy understanding of self-worth as one seeks to find meaning and purpose in life (Collins, 2005).

Holmes (1980) developed a typology of Christian spirituality, which involves the study and interpretation of scriptures, noting that prayer forms a foundational base. Within his typology, he looks at prayer from various viewpoints. Holmes proposed that prayer involves both action and receptive modes of consciousness. It requires tapping into one's logical and analytical sides as well as personal surrender, intuition, and the association of symbols and rituals. The phenomenology of prayer includes meditation as well as speculative and affective illumination while the sociology of prayer recognizes there is a relationship between culture and the broad range of Christian traditions.

Although influenced by Holmes' work, Peace (1997) developed somewhat of a different typology of spirituality; but it also stressed prayer as a key component. Peace

focused on the transforming relationship with Christ, where Christian spirituality involves spiritual formation and the development of a Christ-like character through discipleship, prayer, Bible study, and sharing the gospel with others. Collins (2005) suggested by reading the Bible as little as 30 minutes a day one begins to think about self and the world differently and as such can bring about compassion to join “others in common causes and activity that lead to accountability, liberty, justice, and expressions of love” (p. 271).

Wanak (2004) suggested there is a “learning as the experience of God” (p. 52) that requires knowing God through bonding with Christ and the study of scripture. Likewise, Ellingson (2001) suggested that spirituality-seeking individuals long for ways to be authentic in their faith and to follow Christ’s example of service to others and social justice. From the evangelical Christian perspective, spiritual growth requires sincere reflection on scriptures within the context of personal experiences, which gives believers “narrative analogues to their own experiences” (Miller, 1997, p. 123).

Roof (1999) discovered that personal struggles and the connection to scripture do indeed help define one’s concept of spirituality, noting that many of the participants he interviewed compared their struggles with life’s issues to the book of Genesis and the story of Jacob wrestling with an angel. For the participants, their personal wrestling may have involved making moral decisions or dealing with other emotional upheavals and life’s disappointments. Consequently, studying and reflecting on scriptures stimulates the mind, emotions, and spirit that can encourage a natural integration of faith and learning in everyday experiences (Wanak, 2004). Placing emphasis on helping students to grow

spiritually certainly promotes healthy character of the heart and mind (Lewis, 2000).

Spiritual self-care not only protects but also informs the inner life so one can live a more effective outer life (Collins, 2005).

Spirituality on College Campuses

Although student development has interested researchers for decades, empirical findings on students' spirituality and spiritual growth within campus environments, especially Christian ones, remain limited (Astin et al., 2004b; Birkholz, 1994; Lindholm, 2004; Ma, 1999). Few researchers have looked at what specific college campus activities or experiences influence college students' spiritual development (Moran, 2004). In an attempt to isolate factors that students may perceive as positively affecting their spiritual development during college, Ma (1999) had 901 college students from 20 Christian institutions throughout the United States complete a 46-item survey, which utilized a Likert scale. Results showed that students identified Bible or theology classes among the top ten most influential factors affecting their spiritual growth. These are relevant findings to the current phenomenological study of students' experiences when studying the Bible in a structured class setting because Ma's research is quantitative and falls short in offering any understanding of why or how their experiences in these types of classes contributed to their spiritual development. Ma's results give support to a link between spirituality and learning theory, discussed later in the section on the conceptual framework that guided the current study.

Based on quantitative survey and poll data, researchers have reported spiritual growth is important to the general population as well as college students (Astin et al.,

2004b; Gallup & Johnson, 2003; Perez, 2006). Such quantitative data cannot reveal the intricacies or complexities of what spirituality means to students, what experiences make meaningful contributions to their spiritual growth, or how and in what ways they tend to express their spirituality (Bender, 2007). Christian institutions have a unique responsibility to value spiritual, intellectual, and social development equally (Birkholz, 1994).

Utilizing Howden's (1992) Spirituality Assessment Scale, McGee et al. (2003) conducted a pre and post study with upper-level students from a large nonsectarian university to see if a classroom intervention increased spirituality. The researchers placed students into either the treatment group or one-of-two comparison groups. Students in the treatment group participated in a course that combined activities believed to express spirituality such as journaling along with a standardized stress management curriculum. The students in one comparison group had only the stress management component of the curriculum and the other comparison group involved students enrolled in family studies courses. Results indicated that students in the intervention group had significantly higher spiritual health scores than students in either one of the two comparison groups. The results of this study provide evidence that structured activities geared toward effecting spiritual growth for college students within non-religiously affiliated college curriculum can have a positive effect on students' spiritual lives.

Holcomb and Nonneman (2004) conducted a mixed design study with 240 students randomly selected from six Christian liberal arts institutions. Students participated in two face-to-face interviews, the first one at the beginning of their

freshman year and the other one 4 years later prior to graduation; they also completed a personality inventory and an instrument developed for the study. The qualitative component utilized Fowler's (1981) stage theory and interview protocol that parallels Erikson (1968) and Piaget's (1971) developmental theories. Results indicated nearly all of the entering freshman students were in Fowler's second or at the beginning of their third stage of spiritual development. Just prior to graduation approximately one-half the students had increased their spiritual development to stage 3.5 or higher.

From their interview data, Holcomb and Nonneman (2004) identified three categories of crises to help explain the growth in students' spirituality. They defined crisis as a "prolonged period of active engagement with, and exploration of, competing roles and ideologies" (p. 100). First, students had lengthy exposure to a wide range of differences in the ways people think. Second, students interacted within a multicultural environment and exposed to different ways in which people live and behave. Finally, students reported experiencing emotional crises, with either family or self, during their four-year studies. The study left many unanswered questions, presented little specifics as to the experiences of students that led to the crisis categories, and offered no interpretation of the students' experiences to capture the essence of their spiritual development over 4 years. The results of this study relate to the current study by providing support for a link between spirituality and Fowler's (1981) stages of faith and Kolb's (1984, 2000) experiential learning theory, where the foundation of learning occurs by transforming experiences through symbolic interaction with others. These are discussed later in the conceptual framework section.

In examining spiritual integration within a Christian university and its relationship between students' spirituality and the academic setting, Morris et al. (2004) conducted a quantitative study with 377 students attending a college in southwestern United States to determine if spiritual integration affected student retention. They applied Tinto's (1993) Model of Student Departure, in which Tinto posited that students enter a college or university with personal attributes, dispositions, goals, and commitments that not only change because of their academic environment but that they also effect institutional change due to their interactions with the educational and social fabric of the institution. In their study, freshman students completed an informational form that covered standard background data, their expectations for school, and personal goals. To operationalize a variable to represent spiritual integration, the researchers had students answer yes and no to statements such as, "Being on campus is contributing to my spiritual growth" and "My understanding of God is being strengthened by classroom and/or campus experiences" (p. 94). Findings revealed that students who saw themselves as having a spiritual fit with their institution were more likely to report they were pleased with the academic rigor, had positive relationships with faculty and peers, and were more interested in successfully completing college than those who did not perceive having a spiritual fit (Morris et al., 2004). Results also indicated that spiritual integration successfully predicted retention of students who would return to the college for their sophomore year. Such results support the value for conducting the current study and the exploration of students' personal experiences while studying the Bible as part of their liberal arts education because it establishes a new source of empirical qualitative data as

it relates to spirituality in higher education. It also provides some curricular insight for educators teaching in Christian institutions that may lead to better meeting the needs and expectations of their students.

Using quantitative methodology, Bassett et al. (2005) conducted a small study with 30 students attending a Christian liberal arts college to measure explicit and implicit attitudes toward spirituality and religion. To measure implicit attitudes, students completed two standardized instruments. First, the Religion Scale (Bardis, 1961) measured thoughts about divinity and relationships with humanity as well as perceived behaviors considered to bring future reward by meeting God's expectations. Second, the study assessed the students' quality of life and their personal relationship with God, themselves as well as with society by utilizing the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (Bufford, Paloutzian, & Ellison, 1991).

To assess explicit attitudes toward spirituality, Bassett et al. (2005) had students perform a computerized task, during which they responded to stimulus words long accepted as part of traditional religious vernacular, such as heaven, prayer, and worship, and spirituality words such as relationship and higher being. The stimulus words were paired with various other words generally thought of as pleasing or unpleasing. Overall, results indicated that students scored high on religious and spiritual well-being. There was a positive relationship between students' personal identity as Christians and their spiritual and religious well-being. Higher student scores on the religion scale also predicted increased explicit attitude scores for spiritual and religious well-being. The participants involved in the current study also attend a Christian liberal arts college and

self-identified as having a Christian religious affiliation. The results of Bassett's research support the findings of the current study as they relate to spiritual well-being and having a personal relationship with God.

Hodge and McGrew (2005) also found that college students attending publicly funded institutions, but who were active members of NACSW, overwhelmingly believed spirituality directly related to having a belief in or connection with God and a higher power. Interestingly, when Hodge and McGrew compared the results with one of their earlier studies conducted with student members of the non-faith-based National Association of Social Workers, only 29% of them believed spirituality directly related to a belief in or connection with God and a higher power as compared to 80% of students in the Christian social work organization. The authors concluded the sizeable difference between members of the two groups should not be surprising because NACSW membership is primarily Protestant and evangelical.

Reeley (2006) also found that students attending religiously affiliated institutions perceived themselves more spiritual than students attending nonsectarian liberal arts institutions and technical colleges. As with the study by Bassett et al. (2005), the results from these studies provide further evidence that Christian college students tend to perceive themselves as spiritual whether they are attending sectarian or publically funded institutions. It came as no surprise that students participating in the current study viewed the interview process as a positive opportunity to share their personal experiences in the Bible class while openly discussing how their lives were affected, spiritually as well as in other ways.

Birkholz (1994) conducted one of the few qualitative studies that actually asked college students to define what spirituality meant to them, discuss how and in what ways spirituality was demonstrated, and who or what activities during their college experience contributed to their spiritual growth. Over a 3-year-period, Birkholz interviewed 54 seniors at Crown College, an institution affiliated with the *Christian and Missionary Alliance*. Birkholz sample consisted of 39 randomly selected participants from senior-level classes as well as 15 specific seniors identified by faculty to participate because the faculty believed they were more spiritually mature students with good oral communication skills. The latter approach for sampling represents a purposeful-sampling and reputational case selection method, a method commonly used in qualitative research to obtain rich data (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999). Birkholz identified common themes for students' definition of spirituality such as yielding or surrendering one's life to God, having a personal relationship with Jesus, being Christlike, and allowing the Holy Spirit to live within as the an enabler to facilitate their spiritual growth (Birkholz). In response to one becoming Christlike, Evans (n.d.) referred to Ephesians 6 and the importance of spiritual armor.

To sum up armor, it is Christ-likeness. To put on Christ-likeness is to say, "How am I to reflect Christ in this situation?" Once we implement the answer to that question, we are armored. It is a reflection of our spiritual relationship with the Savior. (¶ 9)

Birkholz (1994) quoted one student who added that spirituality is "not a term of acts and do's and don'ts. It's not legalism" (p. 51). Another quoted student believed that spirituality comes from being close to or having an intimate relationship with the Lord,

but it was something that had to be developed and nurtured by reading, memorizing, and reflecting on God's word.

Students in the Birkholz (1994) study viewed spirituality as a fundamental fact of life, at the essence of being and not something that could be set apart from who they were. Spirituality was an inward condition reflected outwardly and observed through various signs and indicators. For the students, the *fruit of the spirit* became a prevailing theme around which outward reflections or signs of one's spirituality make themselves known. "But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 6:3, p. 1069). Other themes that reflected spirituality included moral character as well as sexual morality, one's level of trust or faith in the Lord, and service to others through interpersonal relationships. Birkholz identified a theme of interior means to spiritual development that involved prayer, reading, and meditation on God's Word through which students built a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. This relationship with Christ led to the internal workings of the Holy Spirit, enabling the students to live out the fruit of the spirit in their daily lives. As discussed earlier, both Holmes (1980) and Peace (1997) proposed typologies of Christian spirituality grounded in prayer and study of the scriptures.

Fifty years ago, Jacob (1957) reported that some teachers and especially small private institutions have a "peculiar potency" (p. 7) to influence students' values and attitudes, which lead some students to adopt a new outlook on life and pursue more socially acceptable goals for their future careers. Interestingly, students at Crown College overwhelmingly identified faculty and staff as being the most influential factor for the

spiritual growth (Birkholz, 1994). According to the students, professors lived by what they taught; they were strong positive role models and supportive counselors. Most of the Crown College students reported the professors' Bible knowledge also influenced their spiritual growth. Other influential factors identified by the students included chapel attendance, having an overall Christian college environment, team sports, and the overall knowledge they gained from their classes, including theology courses.

Birkholz (1994) concluded that although most students believed that one's spirituality could fluctuate, they perceived or measured their level of spiritual maturity by their personal efforts in seeking and following God's will for their lives. Graham (n.d.) suggested that people could experience fluctuating spirituality, primarily because human emotions fluctuate. To maintain a positive spiritual journey, Graham has often encouraged Christians to read the Bible and pray every day—letting God work through the Holy Spirit. “As the good seed of the Word of God is planted in the heart, watered by prayer, and cultivated through obedience, praise, and Christian service, the child of God matures spiritually” (§ 2).

The Birkholz (1994) study provided a strong connection to the current study because Crown College shares two factors with the host university of this study. First, both institutions are evangelical Christian liberal arts institutions. Second, they are both members of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU, 2010), previously discussed in the section on the evangelical perspective. The primary goal of the Birkholz study was to discover how students defined spirituality and how and in what ways they believed it was demonstrated in their lives. Although students reported the

overall knowledge they gained from their coursework, including theology classes, influenced their spiritual growth, Birkholz simply made mention of this and did not explore how or in what ways studying the Bible as part of their required liberal arts education actually contributed to their spiritual lives. All of the evangelical Christian liberal arts colleges and universities belonging to CCCU require their students to take Bible courses before they graduate. This requirement emphasizes the great value placed on such courses and the potential they have to help students develop and grow spiritually, which also provides additional rationale for the current study.

Conceptual Framework for the Current Study

Evangelical Christian liberal arts colleges and universities are committed to promoting moral and spiritual development of their students as well as strong character grounded in a biblical worldview (CCCU, 2010; Lansdale, 1991). Because phenomenological researchers often frame and interpret their data from a broader philosophical perspective, Fowler's (1981) structural-developmental framework for the stages and dimensions of faith, Gibson's (2004) model for spiritual development, derived from Kohlberg's (1981) theory of moral reasoning, and Thayer's (1996) spirituality scales, derived from Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, provides the conceptual framework for the current study.

The Link Between Faith and Spirituality

The phrase, having faith, denotes an action or the existence of a condition or state. Hebrews 11:1 instructs Christians that "faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" (NIV, 1984, p. 1106) and 2 Corinthians 5:7 reminds

Christians to “live by faith, not by sight” (p. 1059). A cornerstone of Christian spirituality is having faith, faith that God has indeed revealed himself through His Son, Jesus Christ, and that the Holy Spirit works through believers (Schneiders, 1990). Fowler (1981) suggested, “faith, then, is an active mode of knowing. . . . [it] is our way of discerning and committing ourselves to centers of value and power that exert ordering force in our lives” (p. 24-25). The Bible gives strong witness to faith; and for the evangelical Christian’s quest for purpose and meaning in life, it must include the study of scripture (Johnson, 1989). As Christians develop their faith and begin to internalize and take ownership of the scriptures, they experience a transformation and grow spiritually (Neal, 1998).

Fowler (1981) built his seminal work on the stages of faith from Erikson’s (1968) psychosocial, Piaget’s (1971) cognitive, and Kohlberg’s (1981) moral reasoning theories. Fowler’s model is considered viable for a conceptual framework to explore and understand the complexities of students’ spirituality while recognizing and appreciating the diversity and richness of their faith (Holcomb & Nonneman, 2004). Within the Fowlerian model, Stage 1 (Intuitive-Projective) involves the development of faith in children between 3 and 7 years of age. Children in this stage of faith development operate cognitively in a fantasy-filled world. Familial relationships and the rituals, images, emotions, and stories of their visible faith greatly influence their development. It is during this stage that children may first encounter the concept of death and the taboos surrounding various social and moral issues.

Stages 2, 3 and 4 are most applicable to the study of college students' spirituality because of the transition from adolescence to emerging adulthood (Fowler, 1981). Stage 2 (Mythic-Literal Faith) begins around 8 years of age and ends at the beginning of adolescence. Although Fowler referred to this stage as the school age stage of faith, he noted that some adolescents as well as adults might linger for years in this stage or never move beyond it. This stage addresses Piaget's (1971) concrete operational thinking where there are literal interpretations of rules and beliefs. Reciprocity becomes central to relationships during Stage 2. While in Stage 3 (Synthetic-Conventional), one's worldview expands beyond the family unit. During this stage, a synthesis of ideas and beliefs begin to take place that is needed to develop identity and new perspectives. This stage tends to represent a time of conformity and an external authority center. The majority of adolescents move through this stage and transition into Stage 4 (Individuative-Reflective). Fowler suggested that some individuals never progress past Stage 3; the expectations and judgment of others remain central to their way of being and they are unable to act autonomously.

According to Fowler (1981), the transition from Stage 3 to Stage 4 is a critical one and the catalyst often involves such events as clashing with authority, leaving home, starting college, and having exposure to new perspectives and experiences that generate self-examination and critical reflection on previously held values and beliefs. Holcomb and Nonneman (2004) found that freshman students tend to enter college while still in Stage 2 or in early development of Stage 3; and the types of catalytic events mentioned by Fowler were indeed quite germane to students during their early years in college.

Others have agreed the transition between the third and fourth stage can be a lengthy and difficult one and perhaps a mid-way 3.5 stage should be added to the model (Holcomb & Nonneman, 2004; Parks, 1986).

Fowler (1981) referred to Stage 4 (Individuative-Reflective) as a time of dual development where self-identity and worldviews are “differentiated from those of others and become acknowledged factors in the reactions, interpretations and judgments one makes on the actions of the self and others” (p. 182). It marks a time of critical reflection, translation of symbols, and meaning making. There is a tendency for individuals to dichotomize issues and become somewhat self-absorbed or egotistical. Explicit doctrine becomes a focal point. They begin to question and seek verification as they try to consider and weigh what they have heard (Holcomb & Nonneman, 2004).

According to Fowler (1981), Stage 5 (Conjunctive Faith) rarely occurs before mid-life. While in this stage, individuals tend to experience boundaries that are more permeable, realize life is complex and paradoxical, have greater appreciation for rituals, myths, and symbols, and respond to deep inner voices. At a certain point in life, Fowler noted that scripture truly ignited his spirituality and moved him deeper into Stage 5 of his own development. Fowler also noted that “Stage 5 acts out of conflicting loyalties [and] its readiness to spend and be spent finds limits in its loyalty to the present order, to its institutions, groups and compromise procedures” (p. 200).

Achieving Stage 6 (Universalizing Faith) is rare. According to Fowler (1981), few individuals reach this stage of faith and spiritual development because it requires a deeply moral actualization. In this final stage, individuals are highly disciplined and no longer

driven by self-preservation. Their clarity of purpose and meaning in life transcend personal gain. They sense a higher calling in life that propels them into action, often in extraordinary and unpredictable ways. Their passion for justice and reform are deeply held values and meaning in life is actualized as a ministry or calling by God. Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Gandhi are a few of the individuals recognized for having achieved the Universalizing stage of faith.

Within the developmental periods of emerging adulthood and beyond, the following five interrelated dimensions of faith development emerged from the synthesis of Fowler's faith stages and apply to the conceptual framework of this study: (a) Finding Meaning and Purpose in Life, (b) Perceived Spirituality, (c) Life-changing Experiences, (d) Sources of Authority, and (e) Values and Beliefs (See Appendix C).

The Link Between Moral Development and Spirituality

The Christian Story abounds with moral and ethical teachings to guide believers and orient them on their Christian journey throughout life (Johnson, 1989). College students enrolled in required Bible classes will find scriptures replete with moral and ethical teachings. Positing there is an inextricable link between morality and spirituality, Gibson (2004) developed a model of spirituality maturity, which is an appropriate framework component for a phenomenological exploration of students' experiences studying the Old Testament and their perceptions of spirituality. Gibson placed spiritual development on a maturity continuum that progresses through four levels. He noted that his model should not be interpreted as a rigid or prescribed path to spiritual development

because the work of the Holy Spirit is mysterious and works uniquely and purposefully through each individual.

Gibson (2004) derived his model from Kohlberg's (1981) theory of moral reasoning. Kohlberg suggested the attainment of one's moral level runs parallel with one's cognitive development, noting that individual intellectual abilities could advance beyond one's level of moral reasoning but not visa versa. Kohlberg's theory of moral reasoning has three levels, with each level having various stages. The first level is *preconventional*, where one's source of authority is self-centered with moral reasoning guided by consequences. The second level is *conventional*, in which one's source of authority is other-centered and behavior seeks to please others. This Kohlberg level also parallels Fowler's Stage 3 (Synthetic-Conventional), with its pull toward conformity and external authority centers. Kohlberg's final level is *postconventional*, where one's source of authority comes from internalized principles and behavior guided by one's conscience. While Kohlberg suggested that individuals who attain the highest stage within the postconventional level of moral reasoning would have a strong religious orientation and agape, or selfless love, he posited that only those with strong intellectual abilities could ever reach this stage.

Acknowledging the narrowness of Kohlberg's (1981) theory as it related to spirituality and its inextricable link to moral reasoning, Gibson (2004) suggested that one's spiritual growth does not necessarily depend on intellectual capacity. The first level of Gibson's model for a Christian's path to spiritual maturity suggests that individuals have a self-centered source of authority with one's actions guided by perceived rewards

and punishment, which follows Kohlberg's first level. Gibson and Kohlberg's second and third levels also closely parallel one another with principle-centered and other-centered authority. Gibson suggested at the second level Christians' spiritual development is actually guided by the imitation and learned adherence to the 10 Commandments while those at the third level of development are guided by internalized values. Christians reaching the third level of their spiritual maturity have a strong commitment to principles grounded in a Christian worldview of spirituality. Gibson posited that Christians reaching the fourth level of spiritual development act upon internalized values and principles. They "act on a vision to fulfill the Great Commission, to foster brotherhood and sisterhood, to house the homeless, feed the poor and embrace the sick, to speak out against inequality, [and] challenge oppressive economic systems" (p. 302).

Gibson's (2004) fourth level involves the same degree of maturity as Fowler's (1981) final stage of faith development, reached by few individuals such as Mother Teresa. Interestingly, Fowler also suggested that Kohlberg's theory falls short of successfully explaining moral development because it does not consider the influence of human emotions, which are fundamental to one's spirituality (See Appendix C).

The Link Between Experiential Learning and Spirituality

It is evident when reading scriptures that different kinds of learning experiences are valuable contributors to one's spiritual growth (Moran, 2004). Kolb (1984) developed an experiential learning model suggesting, "knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (p. 41). In other words, individuals' experiences establish

their foundation for learning. Within Kolb's (1984) model, transforming experiences involves grasping the concrete, or one's immediate experiences, as well as abstract experiences that occur through symbolic interaction with others. From Kolb's perspective, learning shapes the path of development through synthesis of one's experiences and their subjective meanings.

Kolb (1984, 2000) developed four adaptive modes. The first mode is Concrete Experience (CE) in which one prefers to learn by feeling. The second mode, Reflective Observation (RO), addresses those who prefer to watch, listen, and reflect. Abstract Conceptualization (AC) is the third mode and represents the preference toward thinking as a way to learn. In the last mode, Active Experimentation (AE), individuals prefer to learn by actually doing. Students engaged in studying the Bible as part of their required curriculum may represent any or all of these adaptive modes. Kolb's theory assumes that ideas are not absolutes or unchangeable; they are fluid, constantly being shaped and reshaped through personal experience. Because Christian spirituality directly relates to actively seeking and knowing God, Romans 12:2 (NIV, 1984) reminds believers to continually engage in the renewing their minds.

Jarvis and Hirji (2006) suggested that all individuals undergo some form of change from every learning experience.

Human learning, then, is more than just transforming the bodily sensations into meaning, it is the process of transforming the whole of our experience through thought, action, and emotion and, thereby transforming ourselves as we continue to build perceptions of external reality into our biography. (p. 92)

There is value in focusing on spirituality within higher education because "its connection to the development and growth of the learner is present in the learning process

itself” (Tolliver & Tisdell, 2006, p. 45). As students study, discuss, and reflect on the Bible, either as a community of learners in the classroom or individually between class periods, it is reasonable to suggest that their knowledge of the Bible will grow and their interpretations of the scriptures will aid their spiritual growth.

A small, but growing number of researchers have applied various components of Kolb’s model to spiritual growth, pointing out that experiential learning is a key component when assessing one’s perceived spirituality. Thayer (1996), a Christian educator, was the first to link spirituality with Kolb’s experiential learning theory by constructing and testing the Christian Spiritual Participation Profile (CSPP). The testing of the instrument provided strong support for reliability with high coefficients of internal consistency and high test-retest coefficients. Factor analysis provided strong evidence that all four of Kolb’s learning modes underlay the 4 scales of the CSPP. Construct validity was strongly supported through a single factor produced by the CSPP total score. High correlations also provided strong support for convergent and discriminate validity. The profile identified eight dimensions of spirituality, which include Bible study, confession, evangelism, fellowship, meditation, prayer, service, and worship. The total score of the CSPP is derived from four scales, Religious Experience, Faith Quest, Vision, and New Life that directly align with Kolb’s (1984, 2000) adaptive modes of Concrete Experience (CE), Reflective Observation (RO), Abstract Conceptualization (AC), and Active Experimentation (AE) (See Appendix C).

Moran (2004) conducted a quantitative study with 583 undergraduate students attending two denominational Christian colleges (Baptist and Pentecostal) to determine if

spirituality and spirituality types were related to college experiences and the students' preferred ways to learn. Moran utilized Kolb's (1993) Learning Style Inventory, Holmes (1980) spirituality model, and Ma's (1999) spiritual growth questionnaire and found statistically significant differences between students' spirituality types and their preferred learning styles. He found statistically significant relationships between spirituality type and several spiritual disciplines such as prayer and Bible study as well as the integration of spiritual activities within the classroom or homework assignments. Results also indicated significant relationships between spiritual growth, learning styles, and spirituality types. Within his sample, Moran identified three types of spiritual growth modes: relational seekers, meaning seekers, and truth seekers.

Some students were more influenced in their spiritual growth by the campus activities that provided socialization and the development of personal relationships. Others experienced higher influence on the spiritual growth through the activities that gave them opportunities for discovering meaning or, in other words, for discovering God and his ways. Finally, some students' spirituality was differentiated by their seeking and knowing God through understanding of theological truth. (p. 89)

According to Johnson (1989), spiritual formation requires an exchange of ideas, critical thought and deliberation, reflection, understanding, and discipleship. If "knowledge is created through the transformation of experience," (Kolb, 1984, p. 41), it is reasonable to believe that college students' attending an evangelical Christian liberal arts university may perceive their experiences during required Bible curriculum as positive contributions to their spiritual development rather than just academic exercises or busywork.

Quantitative or Qualitative Methodology

Whether to choose quantitative, qualitative, or a mixed methods depends on the purpose of the study (Winter, 2000). Quantitative methodology generally seeks to measure mathematically whether or not differences exist or changes occurred over time within or between groups of individuals. Qualitative research methodology is integrative and holistic; it illuminates and brings understanding of phenomenon through the synthesis of personal experiences and meanings (Bleakley, 2005). Phenomenological researchers seek to interpret meaning of phenomenon and experiences through the meanings assigned by individuals who personally experienced the phenomenon rather than assigning meanings based on preset criterion or the theoretical conventions required by quantitative methodology. In other words, the phenomenological researcher seeks to understand a single phenomenon through the experiences of individuals by analyzing and interpreting narrative data, generally collected during lengthy face-to-face interviews.

Quantitative research has strict rules that guide the research, with all effort to remove the researcher and bias from the process. As Nastasi and Schensul (2005) expressed, numbers cannot truly capture the behavior of humans. Qualitative research immerses the researchers in the process of studying phenomenon in natural settings, and they are most often the instrument for data collection (Tuckett, 2005). Quantitative researchers often design case control studies in order to measure treatment effect. As the focus of phenomenological research is to explore the lived experiences of participants, having a control group with members who did not experience the phenomenon would yield meaningless data.

Another major difference between statistical methodology used in quantitative studies and those utilized by phenomenological researchers is sample size. Prior to conducting a quantitative study, sample size is computed based on a power analysis and effect size. Sample size for phenomenological studies cannot be predetermined through mathematical formulas. It is often customary in phenomenological studies to begin with approximately 10 participants. Final sample size is reached when the narrative data reaches saturation, which means the data becomes redundant (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Tuckett (2005) provided a matrix that compares the positivist model of terminology used to support the rigor of quantitative research to that of the post-positivist qualitative approach. For instance, while quantitative research requires internal and external validity, qualitative research seeks such characteristics as credibility, truth value, transferability, fitness, and verification through triangulation of data. Quantitative research focuses heavily on reliability and the replication of findings while qualitative traditions seek dependability, auditability, and consistency (Creswell, 2003, Tuckett, 2005).

Another approach to conducting research involves the use of mixed methods, where researchers collect and analyze quantitative data as well as qualitative data, most often sequentially or concurrently (Creswell, 2003). The two methods can be given equal weight in the design or one approach can take priority with the other serving in a supportive role (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006). As with single-method designs, the use of mixed-method designs have both the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative and

quantitative methodology as well as some distinct ones as a result of combining methods. According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), distinct strengths of utilizing mixed methods include the ability to use a combination of narrative and inferential statistics to answer more complex research problems, test grounded theory, and overcome weaknesses inherent in single-method designs. Mixing or combining methods can provide corroboration of findings and increase generalizability. There are strong arguments that mixed method designs are not without serious weaknesses (Bazely, 2004; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006; Yin, 2006). To utilize mixed methods properly, researchers must become knowledgeable about each method and the complexities involved with integrating them appropriately without merely having a lateral presentation of results. Because mixed method studies are more difficult for individuals to execute as well as more time consuming and expensive, they are generally considered more appropriate for research teams (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie). As to the present study, it would have been premature to consider using a mixed method design. Nothing is yet known about the lived experiences of students in required Bible classes at a liberal arts evangelical Christian university or about how their experiences affected their spiritual lives. The results of the current study may introduce variables that spawn future research with mixed method designs.

The supportive argument for quantitative research is its rigorous systematic rules for sampling and its mathematical representations of data (Creswell, 1998). Qualitative research focuses on several data verification techniques to address the rigor of research (Creswell, 1998; Tuckett, 2005). For instance, a common technique involves negative

case analysis in which researchers modify and adjust working hypotheses when there is disconfirming evidence that diminishes credibility. Another technique to support trustworthiness and rigor involves member checks, or having participants review data for accuracy. Qualitative researchers may turn to external audits to assess accuracy; the responsibilities of an external auditor parallel those of financial auditors who have no connection or stake in the outcome.

Tuckett (2005) stressed that the credibility and dependability of qualitative research is greatly enhanced by the operational technique of triangulation because it helps to overcome researcher bias and weaknesses inherent in any one single design. Tuckett discussed two types of triangulation. First, triangulation involves the use of different types of data collection to study one particular phenomenon such as interviews, focus groups, and then perhaps the participants own personal journals. Second, the technique of investigator triangulation involves using more than one research observer. According to Tuckett, investigator triangulation could involve additional observers or it could be one or more additional investigators used to analyze the same data. When qualitative researchers present rich and thick descriptions that cover not only the participants but also process, methods, and context, the trustworthiness of findings increases greatly; this supports the rigor and the value of the research (Schensul et al., 1999). Because qualitative researchers involve themselves as active learners, their insights lead to valuable contextual knowledge (Creswell, 1998). In particular, by utilizing the interview method for the current study, students enrolled in a Bible class had the opportunity to reflect on personal experiences as well as how or in what ways they may have affected

their spiritual development. According to Fowler (1984), exploring the narrative is a powerful and preferred method to not only gather personal meanings but also uncover shared meanings. Narrative on spirituality and Bible study within an academic setting brings process, contents, and contexts together in an effort to “. . . recover a sense of meaning as being connected with history, a sense of disclosure and depth as being connected with experience” (Fowler, 1981, p. 81). Phenomenological research has but one goal, and that is to discover the meaning of phenomenon through the voices of those who lived it (Creswell, 1998).

Summary

Marler and Hadaway (2002) reported the entry into the 21st century marked a surge in spiritual seeking among Americans. Within one’s spiritual values lay the foundation for the pursuit of purpose and meaning in life as well as valuing human relationships, expectations for a just society, adopting ethical standards, and assuming moral responsibility (Grimmitt, 1994; Parks, 1991).

This chapter reviewed the literature revealing a broad but growing interest in the topic of spirituality in higher education. The discussion of the literature concentrated on the potential for students’ spiritual growth and transformation through the study of scriptures from an evangelical Christian perspective, while at the same time recognizing the diversity of students on today’s college campuses.

A section of the chapter discussed adolescents and their transition to emerging adulthood because of its relevance to the early years of the college experience. The chapter also presented the guiding conceptual framework for this research project, which

includes Fowler's (1981) stages of faith, a model for spiritual development by Gibson (2004), and Kolb's experiential learning theory, which underlies Thayer's (1996) spirituality scales. The chapter concluded with an overview of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies and discussed the rationale for conducting the current study within the phenomenological tradition.

In the following chapter, I will describe the research design components of this study, my role as researcher, and ethical considerations for conducting a qualitative study. I will present the results of the study in chapter 4. In chapter 5, I will discuss my interpretations of the data, social change implications, and recommendations for future research studies.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHOD

Introduction

Although enrollment on religiously affiliated campuses has climbed at a substantially faster rate than on public or other types of private institutions (NCES, 2004), few researchers have looked at what specific activities, courses, or personal experiences during the college years influence the spiritual development of students. I begin the chapter with a brief reiteration of the rationale for exploring female students' experiences in MBUs Old Testament course and for choosing the qualitative method. I provide a thorough discussion of my Christian perspective and role as researcher. I also present the central research question and subquestions of this study, describe the research design, which includes setting, participant recruitment, and the demographics of the final sample. I provide a description of the types of data collected, the process I used to code and reduce the data into themes and then into domains or categories, and how I analyzed the data. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of ethical issues and my plans for disseminating the findings.

Rationale for Selecting Old Testament Course

The Old Testament course at MBU was chosen for this study because the university requires this course for all undergraduate students and no empirical evidence existed about how or in what ways studying the Bible in an academic setting affected students, spiritually or in other ways.

Qualitative Tradition

I utilized a qualitative methodology within the phenomenological tradition because of its integrative and holistic approach. While quantitative studies are written parsimoniously, qualitative studies provide story-like narratives that strive to illuminate understanding of phenomenon through the synthesis of personal experiences and personal meanings (Bleakley, 2005; Creswell, 1998). In particular, phenomenological researchers seek to understand phenomenon through the lived experiences of individuals who have personally experienced the phenomenon rather than assign meanings or operationalize variables as in a quantitative design. Although quantitative methodology measures mathematically whether or not differences exist or changes occurred over time within or between groups of individuals and has strict rules that guide the research process to remove the researcher and personal bias, Nastasi and Schensul (2005) has found that numbers cannot truly capture the behavior of humans.

Qualitative researchers immerse themselves in the process of studying phenomenon in natural settings and most often become the instrument for data collection (Tuckett, 2005). Quantitative research often involves case control studies to measure treatment effect. Having a control group of participants who did not experience a phenomenon would yield meaningless data because the focus of a phenomenological study is on the lived experiences of participants. As such, phenomenological research is an excellent method to explore personal experiences and uncover meaning (Lavery, 2003). Because there are no commonly agreed upon definitions of spirituality (Wilding et al., 2005) the phenomenological tradition lends itself nicely to this area of study because,

as a construct, spirituality is multifaceted and a subjectively experienced phenomenon. No researchers to date have specifically looked at the lived experiences of college students who are required to take Bible courses as part of their liberal arts education.

Data Verification, Credibility, and Trustworthiness

Qualitative research is not replicable, an issue considered fundamental to quantitative research and the concept of reliability (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Shaughnessy, Zechmeister, and Zechmeister (2005) helped to explain this positivist view of reliability by raising the question as to whether or not different observers viewing and analyzing the same observational data would come to the same conclusions. According to the positivist view, reality is controllable and predictable because reality is tangible. Such inquiry can be value free, allowing for context-free and time-free generalizations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Conversely, the naturalistic paradigm, which governs phenomenological research, suggests inquiry is most certainly value bound and reality is constructed. Phenomenological inquiry is bound in time and context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These principles do not negate the importance of verifying that data is credible and trustworthy. The following techniques briefly describe the measures taken to assure credibility and trustworthiness of data discovered in the current study. The application and execution of these techniques are discussed in chapter 4.

Saturation

Reaching saturation involves collecting interview data until no new information surfaces (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To help assure data saturation, I reviewed notes recorded on the Student Interview Protocol forms (Appendix A) after

each day of interviews and transcribed the participant interviews as quickly as possible so that early detection of meaningful statements could be highlighted, which assisted me in the initial mapping of emerging themes and the detection of data saturation.

Member Checking

Validating the accuracy of qualitative research refers to the authenticity of findings and researchers consider it a real strength of qualitative research (Creswell, 2003). To enhance trustworthiness, I utilized member checking, which allowed all participants the opportunity to read their transcriptions and offer corrections or clarifications (Tuckett, 2005). According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), member checking is the most essential technique to establishing credibility. Member checking will also allow participants to review and comment on findings before the wide dissemination of study results.

Participant Quotations

Creswell (1998) suggested it is important to “bring in the voice of participants” (p. 170) within the text of the narrative. Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, and Davidson (2002) also recommended generous use of participant quotations because it “helps the reader to evaluate the authenticity of the researcher’s claims about the data.” The results section of this study integrated copious use of participant quotations, providing contextual and unbiased evidence of the participants’ personal experiences while studying the Old Testament in an academic setting.

Negative Case Analysis

Creswell (2003) referred to negative case analysis as identifying negative cases, or discrepant information that may surface during data analysis. Any findings that diverged from the primary themes revealed in the data are presented in chapter 4.

Audit Trail

I utilized portions of the audit trail classification system presented by Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 382), but developed by Halpern (1983). An audit trail is a record of steps taken by the researcher that helps govern research process. The components of the audit trail used in this study include the following classifications: (a) raw data, (b) data reduction and analysis, (c) data reconstruction and synthesis, and (d) process notes. Raw data consists of the types of files the researcher can use such as video or audio tapes, field notes, interview records, and survey results. According to Lincoln and Guba, data reduction and analysis involves funneling large amounts of information by identifying meaningful statements, themes, behaviors, and ideas. Data reconstruction and synthesis involves identifying relationships, interpreting findings, and making inferences as well as integrating findings and connecting them to existing literature. Process notes consist of such items as logging the researcher's activities, strategies, decision-making techniques, and rationale.

External Auditor

Finally, to strengthen the trustworthiness of the findings, I engaged an external auditor to review study findings at three different stages during the process. The first review by the auditor occurred once I had coded data and identified prevailing themes.

The second review occurred after I completed the first draft of data analysis and interpretation. The final review occurred just prior to submitting the final draft to the committee chair.

According to Creswell (2003), the role of an external auditor parallels that of a financial auditor who has no stake in the outcome. The auditor probes into the findings, identifies areas that need further scrutiny, and asks questions about issues the researcher may have overlooked. The perspective of an external auditor also provides the opportunity for triangulation, which helps to corroborate evidence and reduce researcher bias.

The external auditor for this study was a male Christian college professor, researcher, theologian, ordained minister, and licensed professional counselor. He has a bachelor's degree in biological sciences and psychology, master's degree in rehabilitation counseling, master's degree in sociology and anthropology, master's degree in divinity, and a Ph.D. in Counseling. He has taught and worked in higher education for approximately 37 years, carrying full professorship and serving in positions as high as the president of a college. He often serves as a consultant to educational institutions and corporations to address student achievement and multicultural awareness. Along with his extensive research on spirituality, he has published numerous articles in peer-reviewed journals dealing with student development, diversity, and international issues, authored a book, and served as a peer-reviewer. He has conducted both qualitative and quantitative research and has taught master and doctoral courses in research methodology. He has

played a key role in developing educational programs in many countries including South Africa, Barbados, England, Russia, Canada, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

The external auditor has been immersed in the culture of the host university of this study for the past 9 years and serves on the institution's Integration of Faith and Learning committee. Along with his knowledge of the university's Christian environment, mission, and the student body, the external auditor's research experience, assessment and critical thinking skills, and theological training helped assure I provided credible and trustworthy findings.

Triangulation

Tuckett (2005) promotes using the technique of triangulation because it helps to overcome "any inherent weakness or bias of a single research strategy" (p. 36). Tuckett discussed two types of triangulation. First, triangulation can involve the use of different sources of data to study a particular phenomenon such as interviews, focus groups, or perhaps the participants own personal journals. Second, the technique of investigator triangulation involves having additional research observers or by having one or more individuals qualified to serve as an external auditor and analyze the same data collected by the primary researcher, followed by a comparison of analyses to identify congruent or incongruent findings.

I utilized both types of triangulation. The data collected during the professor's interview provided a second source of data, which helped to confirm student findings. A highly trained researcher served as an external auditor by independently analyzing the data I collected and by holding me accountable for the procedures I used to collect and

analyze data. An audit trail, with process notes, and my personal thoughts and impressions, recorded electronically while I worked with the data, provided additional mechanisms for researcher accountability (see Appendixes D and E).

Role and Perspective of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher becomes the primary instrument for data collection. The goal of the researcher is to capture the emic perspective of those who have personally experienced a phenomenon (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005). It is important that qualitative researchers have skills in interviewing and observation as well as analyzing and interpreting data.

Technical Skills of the Researcher

The above-mentioned interviewing and observation skills parallel those needed in a mental health therapeutic relationship. My background in clinical work and private practice counseling assisted me greatly in conducting my research. I have training and experience in interviewing and constructing social histories as well as developing therapeutic interventions from the ongoing observations and various other data collected throughout a clinical relationship.

Personal Biases and the Evangelical Christian Perspective

Beyond the technical skills needed to conduct this research properly, I believe it is also important to discuss my perspective as an evangelical Christian researcher on this project. I was raised in a Christian home and the context of many childhood stories I learned centered on biblical principles and well-known Bible characters. I remember memorizing Bible Scriptures as a young girl and reciting them in Sunday school. It was

not until I reached mid-adolescence that I took ownership of having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, at which time I began experiencing an inner spiritual awakening. The Bible Scriptures memorized as a child suddenly had personal relevance to me. I found, as Fowler (1981) suggested, I hungered for an affirming God. Bible Scriptures helped me feel closer to God and grow spiritually stronger. All of my Bible study has been linked to either church-related activities or personal devotions. I never studied the Bible within a structured academic setting.

I work full time at the Christian liberal arts university in which the study took place. I acknowledge my values and biases intertwine when it comes to personal perceptions of Christian spirituality. My concept of spirituality is framed within the evangelical Christian belief in the Holy Trinity of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I believe Christian spirituality is both an inner and outward experience and involves the whole person, one's body, mind, and soul. I believe it is through a synthesis of my values, faith, and a personal relationship with Christ that I continue finding meaning and purpose in my life through my daily experiences and interpersonal relationships. To me, spirituality and religious faith are inextricable.

There is a tendency for most Americans to connect spirituality with religiousness is because of the religious communities within which they grew up and the traditions and teachings that guide their lives (Bender, 2007). According to Marler and Hadaway (2002), most Americans share my belief in a strong link between spirituality and religiousness. They reviewed research conducted between the 1980s and 2000 on self-perceptions of being spiritual and religious across a broad range of age cohorts and

regions throughout the United States. They found that most Americans not only believed spirituality and religiousness were interdependent but also saw themselves as both spiritual and religious. In their qualitative study of the connections and distinction between spirituality and religion, Hodge and McGrew (2005) found that only 4% of the college students involved in their study believed there was no relationship between spirituality and religious faith. Zinnbauer et al. (1997) found nearly three-fourths of individuals connected spirituality and religiousness, linked together by perceptions of what they considered sacred.

Although my perspective in closely linking spirituality and religiousness falls within the majority of Americans, Marler and Hadaway (2002) did note there appears to be a slight trend among some Americans who view spirituality and religiousness as mutually exclusive, reporting themselves as spiritual but not religious. Researchers have shown those falling into the category of being spiritual but not religious tend to report an agnostic viewpoint and hold to new age beliefs that focus on non-traditional mystical experiences along with supernatural properties of crystals (Marler & Hadaway; Zinnbauer et al., 1997).

As researcher, I took on the perspective of *epoche* to assure my personal biases, values, and meaning of spirituality did not act as barriers to discovering what spirituality meant to the participants in this study (Patton, 2002, p. 485). Researchers have acknowledged within the evangelical Christian perspective studying scripture is believed to reveal life's truths and serves as a conduit to knowing God and his ways as well as knowing oneself (Duff, 2003; Wanak, 2004). As spirituality becomes an integrally woven

component of one's perception of self, I believe studying scripture is an indispensable element of spiritual self-care and promotes a healthy understanding of my self-worth (Collins, 2005).

The literature reviewed prior to conducting this study prompted me to explore the experiences of students studying the Old Testament in a structured academic setting and to discover how it affected their lives. The literature I reviewed suggested college students' attending an evangelical Christian liberal arts university would perceive their experiences during the 16-week Old Testament Bible course as opportunities for spiritual development rather than merely academic exercises or busywork to earn a grade. Evangelical Christians believe the Bible is the living and infallible word of God and the study of scripture reveals life's truths as one seeks purpose and meaning in life (Duff, 2003; Fowler, 1981; Wanak, 2004). As I have had similar personal convictions, I began this study believing as students studied, discussed, and reflected on the scriptures, both as a community of learners in the classroom and individually between class periods, and as their knowledge of the Bible increased and perspectives broadened, their spiritual lives would be affected. I acknowledge my personal beliefs and perspective may influence the interpretation of findings. Various strategies for controlling personal biases have been employed.

Research Questions

Central Research Question

Within the phenomenological tradition, this study explored and discovered answers to the following central research question:

How and in what ways did studying the Old Testament Bible in a course at a liberal arts evangelical Christian university affect female students' spiritual development?

Subresearch Questions

To aid in the exploration of the central research question, this study also explored and discovered answers to the following subquestions:

1. How did female students perceive their personal experiences as they related to the Bible course knowing they had to take it as part of their graduation requirement?
2. Did studying the Bible in a structured academic setting affect the female students' lives in other ways?
3. Were there any in-class or out-of-class activities or experiences throughout the term that particularly stood out for the female students as having an affect on them spiritually or in other ways?

Context of Study and Research Design

Study Setting

The study took place at MBU, an evangelical Christian university located in suburban St. Louis, Missouri. The university has an average undergraduate enrollment of 1,500 students (approximately 55% female, 45% male), ranging between 18 and 70 years old, plus 1,900 high school students dual-enrolled through the nationally accredited EXCEL program. The undergraduate student body is moderately diverse in race/ethnicity and the university has drawn students from approximately 60 different countries and territories. All students who earn an undergraduate degree from MBU, regardless of their

program of study or the number of hours transferred in from prior college attendance, are required to take two Bible courses: Old Testament History and New Testament History.

The university has membership in CCCU (2010) and actively promotes the integration of faith and learning in the fulfillment of its mission (MBU, 2010).

Missouri Baptist University is an evangelical Christian, liberal arts institution of higher learning whose purpose is to offer programs of study leading to professional certificates, undergraduate degrees, and graduate degrees in an environment of academic excellence from a Biblically based Christian perspective. The University is committed to enriching its students' lives spiritually, intellectually, and professionally, and to preparing students to serve in a global and culturally diverse society. (p. 10)

Although the university reports anecdotal evidence of spiritual development, the institution has never engaged in scientific research to explore and understand how or in what ways the required Bible courses affect students or what personal meanings the students place on their experiences within an academic setting that promotes an evangelical Christian worldview.

Participants

My employment and interaction with undergraduate students at MBU spawned my interest in studying the lived experiences of college students during their studies in the Old Testament History class, a required course for all undergraduate students regardless of their major. The largest day section of the Old Testament History course, located on MBUs main campus, provided a pool of female students for this study. This particular fall 2008 section had a total enrollment of 94 students (43 females, 51 males).

Gender differences in spirituality may influence how males and females perceive their experiences in a theology course. Bryant (2007b) recently found in a national study

of 3,690 college students that males and females differed on 13 spiritual dimensions, which included spirituality, spiritual/religious growth, spiritual quest, aesthetically based spiritual experience, and religious commitment. For all 13 dimensions, females scored significantly higher than males ($p < .001$), suggesting they are more interested in and sensitive to their spiritual lives. Other findings have also indicated the expression of spirituality is a function of gender (Hickson, Housley, & Wages, 2000). Researchers have not yet explored the experiences that liberal arts college students' have when they are required to study the Bible as part of their academic curriculum.

As there was potential for gender differences in how the students may perceive their experiences in the Bible course related to their spirituality, the use of a homogenous sample of females in the current study allowed me to control the gender variable. I also chose to interview only females because I found from my personal experiences in working with female clients in private practice they tended to be more interested in and more verbal about their spirituality than did my male clients. The selection criteria limited the participant pool to female students enrolled in the largest main campus section of the Old Testament History course, ranging between 18 and 22 years of age, and having a self-reported Christian religious affiliation. I found the female-to-female interviews did lend itself nicely to a relaxed atmosphere and helped to establish rapport in a timely manner, which maximized our time together. Participant selection remains a limitation of this study.

Recruitment. During week 12 of the fall semester, I visited the classroom to present an overview of my study and the selection criteria to all of the students in the

designated section of the Old Testament History course. I arrived approximately 30 minutes before the end of class. The professor introduced me to the class and announced I was going to tell them about my research project, after which he left the classroom. During a brief overview of the study (see Appendix F for recruitment script), I communicated clearly as to participation being strictly voluntary, the confidentiality of interview, and noted participants would be given a fictitious name to protect their identity. I told students their decision to participate or not participate would have no bearing on their grade for the class or how they would be perceived then or in the future by me or anyone else tied to the university.

At the conclusion of the presentation, I handed out the Letter of Invitation (Appendix G) with a blank envelope attached to all of the female students in the classroom. I asked them to take their time reading the letter, respond to the items on the letter, seal it in the envelope provided, and return it to me as they exited the classroom. While the students read the letter, I walked to the door at the rear of the classroom. As the students exited the classroom, 25 females handed me a sealed envelope, after which I placed the envelopes in a briefcase and left campus.

Final sample. Sample size for qualitative studies cannot be predetermined prior to the beginning of a study or through mathematical formulas. It is often standard procedure with phenomenological studies such as this one to begin with 10 participants and collect narrative data through lengthy face-to-face interviews (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Phenomenological researchers determine final sample size when the data reaches

saturation, which means interview data becomes redundant and no new themes or divergent data emerges.

To identify the initial 10 participants, I shuffled the 25 envelopes to randomize the order for follow-up contact. After opening the envelopes, I sorted them into Yes and No stacks. Fifteen of the 25 students replied with a Yes. I initially telephoned and emailed the first 10 students in the Yes stack. Nine students readily made appointments to meet. One student never responded to the emails or phone calls, so I selected the next student in the Yes pile and arranged a meeting time with her. To assure data saturation, I later returned to the last four students in the Yes stack to arrange a meeting, three of whom followed through with the interview. Nearly all of the student interviews took place between November 17 and November 24, with the final student interview on December 9, one day before the students' scheduled final exam. The final sample consisted of 13 female students, all of whom signed informed consent forms and received a copy of the researcher's confidentiality agreement (see Appendixes H and I).

Data Collection

Face-to-face interviews are at the heart of phenomenological studies (Creswell, 1998). Such interviews can either be unstructured, where no questions are preformulated before the interview, or semistructured in which a few questions are developed prior to the interviews. According to Schensul et al. (1999), semistructured interviews are preferred when the purpose of the research is to explore and describe phenomenon. Face-to-face interview data helps pave the way for expanding findings through quantitative methods once potential variables have been discovered in the qualitative data.

Individual Student Meeting Process

The primary source of data for this study came from lengthy one-on-one interviews with the final sample of 13 female students, all of which took place in a reserved room in the back of the university library. As each student arrived for her appointment, I allowed ample time for explaining the study in more detail and answering questions.

Once the students indicated they did not have any more questions about the study, I asked them if they were interested in participating in an interview. All of the students appeared excited about the research and stated they were ready to move into the interview process immediately. At this time, students were given a copy of the Informed Consent form (Appendix H). They read the form and were given ample time to ask additional questions if they so wished. They signed and dated their form. I signed it also. Next, I completed the Researcher Confidentiality Agreement form (Appendix I.). I made copies of both executed forms at a copier outside the interview room, kept the original Informed Consent form, and gave the students a copy of it. I kept a copy of the researcher's confidentiality agreement and gave the students the original.

Student Participant Demographics

Prior to beginning the audio recordings of the interviews, I asked the participants to complete a short anonymous demographic survey (Appendix B). As shown below in Table 1, one student was Hispanic while the remaining 12 students were White. The average age of the participants was 19 years, with the youngest at 18 years, 2 months, and the oldest at 20 years, 3 months. Participants represented some religious diversity, with 5

Baptist/Southern Baptist, 3 Non-denominational Christians, 2 Catholic, 1 Lutheran, 1 Pentecostal, and 1 Evangelical Free. At the time of their interviews, 10 of the students were just completing their first semester in college and 3 of them were sophomores. Only one of the participants had previously taken the New Testament History course, the other required Bible course for all undergraduate students. For the remaining 12 students, the Old Testament History course was their first experience with studying the Bible in an academic setting. Only 1 of the 3 sophomore students transferred to MBU; the other two started at MBU as freshman. All but two of the students were living in a campus dormitory at the time of their interviews.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Race Ethnicity	Age Years / Months	Religious Affiliation	College Level	Program Major	Transfer Student	In Dorm
White	18 / 6	Baptist	Freshman	Undecided	No	Yes
White	19 / 0	Non- denomination	Freshman	Secondary Education	No	Yes
White	18 / 7	Southern Baptist	Freshman	Science Education	No	Yes
White	18 / 10	Lutheran	Freshman	Music Education	No	Yes
Hispanic	18 / 2	Catholic	Freshman	Psychology	No	Yes
White	19 / 2	Southern Baptist	Freshman	History	No	Yes
White	19 / 1	Pentecostal	Freshman	Elementary Education	No	No
White	18 / 7	Southern Baptist	Freshman	Music Education	No	Yes
White	18 / 11	Southern Baptist	Freshman	Religious Education	No	Yes
White	18 / 2	Non- denomination	Freshman	Religious Education	No	Yes
White	20 / 3	Evangelical Free	Sophomore	History	No	Yes
White	20 / 3	Non- denomination	Sophomore	Church Music	No	No
White	19 / 6	Catholic	Sophomore	Biotech	Yes	No

Student Interviews

When it was time to begin each interview, I started an audio recording. I used the student interview protocol form (Appendix A) to guide the semistructured interview and to note non-verbal behaviors and thoughts or ideas that surfaced. These notes provided additional information and served as prompts for further exploration during the individual interviews. For instance, some of the students were animated during their interviews, while others had tears well up in the eyes when talking about their experiences.

Prior to asking the first question, I orally announced the date, time, and location of the interview, so it would be part of the recording; I also wrote this same information in the space provided on the Interview Protocol form. Neither the audio recording nor the interview form had the participants' real names. At the conclusion of the interviews, I thanked the students for assisting her and turned off the audio recording. The shortest of the student interviews lasted 37 minutes with the longest interview at 82 minutes. The average time for all of the student interviews was 52 minutes.

Data Saturation

From the audio recordings, I produced verbatim transcripts of each student interview as quickly as possible to assist in recognizing data saturation. Data saturation, or when interviews no longer produce new information, is the only way to determine the final sample size of phenomenological studies (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schensul et al., 1999). Although at the conclusion of the tenth interview, the data showed signs of reaching saturation, I returned to the remaining pool of 4 interested students who had responded to the invitation letter and interviewed 3 additional participants.

Teacher Interview

A face-to-face interview with the professor teaching the course and his classroom manager provided the second major source of data for this study. The teacher, Dr. Chambers, had agreed to participate in an interview during the formative stage of this research project. Dr. Chambers requested that his classroom manager, Ms. Tudor, participate in the interview as well because she had considerably more out-of-class interaction than he did with the students. This interview took place in the professor's campus office 6 days after the students had completed their final examination of the course. Prior to the beginning of the interview, the Informed Consent and Researcher Confidentiality forms were completed (Appendixes H and I).

The interview with the professor and his classroom manager served two purposes toward supporting the validity of the students' results by providing opportunities for triangulation. First, I wanted to identify the goals and learning objectives the teacher had for the course. Second, I wanted to explore how the class as a whole responded to the experience of studying the Bible in a required academic setting and what course activities or assignments, from their perspective, may have influenced the students spiritually or perhaps in other ways (see Appendix J for the teacher interview protocol). The interview was audio recorded and transcribed, following the same process outlined above for the student interviews. This interview lasted 80 minutes.

Data Analysis

Student Data

Before beginning data analysis, I took considerable time reflecting and bracketing my personal biases and experiences related to my own spirituality and faith development to minimize the influence of presuppositions or biases that could interfere with discovering the real essence of the participants' experiences.

Shortly after transcribing each interview, I read the transcript to get a good feel or sense of the data. I also began highlighting meaningful statements to assist in determining data saturation and made some initial margin notations. Margin notations included listing thoughts or ideas that came to mind, theorizing, and mapping comments to each other (Tuckett, 2005).

Once I had an overall sense of the data collected from the students, I re-read the student transcripts two additional times. While reading the transcripts the final time, I also listened to the recorded interviews to note tone of voice and emotional nuances of each participant. At this point, I labeled the student transcriptions with their fictitious names.

Coding procedure. I used inductive and deductive reasoning to organize the data into clusters of meanings that emerged from the findings. Creswell (1998) described meaning clusters as the textural and structural descriptions of the students' experiences, what they experienced, and how they experienced it. Meaning statements reveal patterns or themes that emerge from frequencies and similarities as well as any instances unlike others. Once I identified all of the meaningful statements from each transcript, I copied

them electronically from the transcripts and pasted them into cells in separate Excel spreadsheets labeled by fictitious names assigned to each participant. The cells in the spreadsheets served as electronic note cards. Before beginning the process to organize the meaningful statements into themes or groupings, I labeled each electronic note card with the participants' corresponding fictitious names. This step was necessary for quoting meaningful statements in chapter 4.

After printing a hard copy all of the Excel note card spreadsheets, I used scissors to cut out each statement. I began organizing the meaningful statements, first according to the primary questions asked during the interview (Appendix A) and second into 16 like groupings. I continued funneling the statements from the 16 like groupings into eight groupings, from which the following 5 major domains emerged: (a) Christian Spiritual Development, (b) Life and Relationship Changes, (c) The Christian-Focused Learning Environment, (d) Transitioning into College Away From Home, and (e) Thoughts on the Future. The initial coding labels and process of reduction used to develop the five major domains are listed in the Audit Trail and Process Notes (Appendix D). To assist in reporting findings and data synthesis, the meaningful statements belonging to each of the five final domains were electronically copied from the Excel note cards into Word documents, organized by themes within the domains when appropriate.

Instructor Data

After transcribing the interview data from the teacher and his classroom manager, I set it aside and did not return to it until I had organized and coded the students' data into

domains and supporting themes. This was a deliberate step to avoid influencing the discovery of salient themes from the students' interviews.

Coding procedure. I read the instructor's transcript three times and followed the same steps as outlined above for extracting meaningful statements, coding, and organizing the findings into five major domains revealed in the data: (a) Course Goals and Objectives, (b) Requiring Students to Take the Course, (c) Curriculum, (d) Relevance of God's Word: Applying What They Learned, and (e) Observations of Spiritual Growth and Development.

Ethical Considerations

Privacy invasion and breach of confidentiality have potential to bring harm to participants (Frankel & Siang, 1999). The primary implication for researchers is to exercise great vigilance to maintain confidentiality and respect privacy. Informed consent recognizes participants' autonomy and empowers them to decide whether they want to participate in the research. It provides a reasonable explanation of any potential risks or participation incentives, such as monetary compensation or extra credit, and explains their right to pull out of a study at any time. Participants of this study were given an appropriate informed consent document as well as the researcher's confidentiality agreement (see Appendixes H and I). After I thoroughly read each transcript to assure I did not have any follow up questions for the participants and the participants had validated their transcripts, I assigned fictitious names or aliases. This provided anonymity and protected their privacy. I was the only one with access to any identifiable data. Copies of the transcriptions given to the external auditor were simply marked as

Interview 1, Interview 2, and so on. Because I worked at the host university, I carefully guarded against the perception of multiple or exploitive relationships as well as coercion to participate. For instance, I verified prior to the interviews that none of participants were or had been a student or advisee of mine. I also verified I had no outside affiliation with any of them such as attending the same church. This study posed no physical harm to participants with minimal-to-no psychological stress.

Recording, Dependability, and Safekeeping of Data

All interviews were recorded on two identical Olympus digital voice recorders, one as the primary recorder, the other one as a backup in case of technology failure. Digital recordings provide highly reliable state-of-the art technology. As interviews were completed, I burned them to duplicate DVDs, again to have a backup if a disk became corrupted. Interviews were then deleted from the recorders. Data on my computer was safe at all times because of a log-on password. My computer remained fully protected by an up-to-date version of Norton 360, which included firewall, antivirus, and antispyware. At the completion of this study, I placed all data, electronic and printed, in a fireproof safe in my home. The safe requires a 5-digit code and a custom key to open.

Summary

This chapter discussed the rationale for utilizing phenomenological research and presented the central research question and subquestions that guided this study. Additional sections were devoted to discussing my role and perspective as a Christian researcher, the research design of the study, which included the setting for the study, participant selection, and the techniques used for data coding and analysis. The chapter

concluded with a discussion of various ethical considerations. Chapters 4 and 5 present the findings of this project, the synthesis of data in relationship to the conceptual framework, and the social implications of this study.

CHAPTER 4:

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of traditional age female college students, 18-22 years old, who were enrolled in an Old Testament History course as part of their required curriculum. The central research question sought to discover how and in what ways their spiritual development was affected because of what they learned and experienced in the Old Testament course, taken at an evangelical Christian liberal arts university.

The findings are reported in this chapter. The chapter begins with a description of how data from the students and teacher interviews were generated, collected, and recorded as well as a thorough explanation of the process used to track and manage the data for coding and thematic identification. There are separate sections for student and teacher results, each with their own domains and supporting themes. Five domains emerged from the student data: (a) Christian Spiritual Development, (b) Life and Relationship Changes, (c) The Christian-Focused Learning Environment, (d) Transitioning into College Away From Home, and (e) Thoughts on the Future.

The teacher's interview also organized into five domains: (a) Course Goals and Learning Objectives, (b) Requiring Students to Take the Course, (c) Curriculum, (d) Relevance of God's Word: Applying What They Learned, and (e) Observations of Spiritual Growth and Development. The teacher's results section ends with a challenge he gave to the students at the end of the semester.

The chapter concludes by revisiting the assumptions made before the study began along with a final summary of this chapter and a look ahead at chapter 5.

Generating, Collecting, and Recording Data

Student Interviews

One-on-one interviews with 13 female students provided the major component of data for this study. The recruitment of students took place on November 10, week 12 of the semester during a regularly scheduled classroom period (See Appendix F for the recruitment script). Nearly all of the student interviews took place between weeks 13 and 14 of the semester. One student interview occurred on December 9, only 1 day prior to the students' final examination. All student interviews took place in a reserved room in the university library.

Just prior to commencing the recorded interviews, students completed a brief demographics survey (Appendix B). Two digital voice recorders were used to record the interviews, one considered the primary recording and the other as a backup in case of hardware failure. The open-ended questions on the Interview Protocol form, found in Appendix A, guided the interviews. Prior to asking the first question, I orally announced the date, time, and location of the interview, so it would be part of the recording; I also wrote the same information in the space provided on the Interview Protocol form.

During the interviews, I occasionally jotted notes on the Interview Protocol form to assist in potential follow up questions about something shared during the interview or to note such items as the participants' body language or emotions expressed. After each day of the interviews, I copied the audio recordings from the digital recorder to a

designated computer and burned them to duplicate disks in case a disk became corrupt during the transcription stage. Upon verifying the integrity of the disks, I deleted the recordings from the digital recorders and the computer. The shortest student interview lasted 37 minutes, with the longest interview taking 82 minutes. The average time for all of the student interviews was 52 minutes.

Teacher Interview

An interview with the professor teaching the course and his classroom manager provided another source of data for this study. The professor, Dr. Chambers, had agreed to participate in an interview during the formative stage of this research project. This interview took place in his private campus office on December 15, 6 days after students completed their final examination. Dr. Chambers asked his classroom manager, Ms. Tudor, to join him in the interview because she interacted more with the students on a daily basis, held exam study sessions with the students, and graded all assignments.

Prior to the beginning of the interview, the Informed Consent and Researcher Confidentiality forms were completed (Appendixes H and I). Both of the digital recorders were used for this interview. I turned on the recorders and announced the date and location of the interview before asking the first question. Two open-ended questions on the Teacher Interview Protocol form (Appendix J) guided the interview, which lasted 80 minutes. I occasionally jotted notes on the form to assist in potential follow up questions or needed clarifications that came to mind during the interview.

Tracking and Managing the Data

Throughout the process of recruitment, interviewing, reading transcripts, meeting with the external auditor, extracting meaningful statements, identifying themes, and data analysis, I kept two separate electronic logs. In the first log, Audit Trail and Process Notes (Appendix D), I recorded various steps taken during the research process. In the second log (Appendix E), I recorded personal thoughts and impressions that came to mind while extracting and organizing meaningful statements from transcripts. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended these types of logs to increase credibility of the study and its findings.

Student Transcripts

I transcribed student interviews as closely as possible to the conclusion of the interviews to determine if follow-up telephone conversations were needed for clarification or elaboration. No follow-up calls were necessary. The audio recordings were clear and audible. After each transcription was completed, I printed a hard copy and read the completed transcript to help provide a sense of what the data was revealing. The timely transcriptions also aided in determining data saturation, meaning that eventually no new data appeared to surface during subsequent interviews. I read every student transcript three times and highlighted or underlined meaningful words and statements and made notations in the margins. Margin notations included listing ideas that came to mind, theorizing, and mapping comments to each other by drawing connecting lines and arrows or marking them with matching asterisks or numbers (Tuckett, 2005). During the third

reading of the transcripts, I simultaneously played the audio recordings to note any expressed emotions or voice inflections left unnoted during the interviews.

While reading the students' transcripts, I began to recognize some consistency across the interviews related to the genuineness of the students, their life-changing experiences during the course, and certain comments echoed by the students. I recorded these thoughts and impressions electronically in a document saved on a designated computer (Appendix E).

The final step before beginning the process of electronically extracting all of the meaningful statements for organization and coding into themes and domains, I assigned each student a fictitious name. No real names had been typed into the transcripts. The transcripts had been initially saved on a designated computer in MS Word documents, labeled by participants' real names. Their real names were initially marked on the CDs, which stored archived copies of the audio recordings, and on the manila folders holding their hard copy transcript, interview protocol form, and informed consent (Appendixes A and H). Until students validated their transcripts, it was necessary to have real names assigned to their materials.

To assign fictitious names, I accessed a baby-naming website to select names that did not already appear on the complete class roster provided by the university. Working through the alphabet and beginning with the first student interview, I selected a fictitious name starting with the letter A and then replaced the second student's name with an alias starting with the letter B, and so on until 13 aliases had been assigned to the saved

transcripts. At this time, I obliterated real names from everything connecting them to what students said during the interviews and replaced them with fictitious names.

Teacher Transcript

I produced a verbatim transcript of Dr. Chambers and Ms. Tudor's interview. I did not read the transcript or begin making margin notations until all student data had been coded and categorized. The decision to hold on reading and highlighting meaningful statements by the teacher and his assistant was a purposeful and deliberate step to avoid potential bias while reading and processing the student interviews. Once all student data had been coded and categorized, I read the teacher interview three times and made margin notations or highlighted meaningful words and phrases. Finally, I coded and organized the teacher data into final domains and supporting themes.

Organizing, Coding, and Thematic Identification

Student Data

To begin the process of identifying the major themes revealed in the student data, I extracted all of the highlighted words and statements from each of the transcripts and pasted them into electronic note cards created in an Excel spreadsheet, one spreadsheet for each student interview. As I pasted the statements into the spreadsheet note cards, I labeled them with the students' fictitious names. I printed a hard copy of all of the spreadsheets and chose to cut out all of the electronic note cards to assist in physically sorting the statements for coding. I first organized all of the meaningful statements by the questions asked from the Student Interview Protocol form (Appendix A) while others were initially coded as miscellaneous statements.

During the second effort to organize the statements, I began sorting and coding them by some emerging themes as well as by some of the questions asked. Upon completing the second coding effort, there were 16 groupings; at the end of the third coding effort, the groupings had been reduced to 12. Finally, the fourth and final coding reduced the groupings to the following major domains or categories: (a) Christian Spiritual Development, (b) Life and Relationship Changes, (c) The Christian-Focused Learning Environment, (d) Transitioning into College Away From Home, and (e) Thoughts on the Future. The Audit Trail and Process Notes (Appendix D) track the initial coding labels and my process of reduction into the final five major domains.

Teacher Data

I followed the identical coding process described above to extract, code, and organize the data from Dr. Chambers and Ms. Tudors' interview. Five domains emerged from the data: (a) Course Goals and Learning Objectives, (b) Requiring Students to Take the Course, (c) Curriculum, (d) Relevance of God's Word: Applying What They Learned, and (d) Observations of Spiritual Growth and Development.

The Findings

Student Interview Results

As previous researchers have indicated, 21st century college students have chosen to attend religiously affiliated institutions more often than secular ones, which suggest they not only want to expand their minds but also their spirits. This study revealed the lived experiences of female participants who studied the Old Testament History as part of their required curriculum at an evangelical Christian liberal arts university. Table 2 shows

the central research question and its subquestions linked to the small set of structured questions listed on the Student Interview protocol form (Appendix A).

Table 2

Central Research Question and Subquestions Linked to Structured Interview Questions

<i>Central research question</i>	<i>Interview questions</i>
How and in what ways did studying the Old Testament Bible in a course at a liberal arts evangelical Christian university affect female students' spiritual development?	Questions 1, 2, 3
<i>Subquestions</i>	
How did female students perceive their personal experiences as they related to the Bible course knowing they had to take it as part of their graduation requirement?	Question 1
Did studying the Bible in a structured academic setting affect the female students' lives in other ways?	Question 3
Were there any in-class or out of class activities or experiences throughout the term that particularly stood out for the female students as having an affect on them spiritually or in other ways?	Questions 2, 3

Domains and Supporting Themes

To explore and discover how and in what ways studying the Old Testament in a course at a liberal arts evangelical Christian university affected female students' spiritual development, participants responded to a few open-ended questions (Appendix A). The first interview question, stated purposefully broad, encouraged the participants to share whatever came to mind about their experiences during the semester-long course. The remaining two multipart interview questions allowed further exploration of the phenomenon to assist in capturing the full essence of the participants' experiences.

Creswell (1998) suggested it was important to “bring in the voice of participants” (p. 170) within the text of qualitative narrative. Fossey et al. (2002) also recommended generous use of participant quotations because it “helps the reader to evaluate the authenticity of the researcher’s claims about the data” (p. 730). The results have liberal use of participant quotations, providing contextual and unbiased evidence of the participants’ personal experiences while studying the Bible in an academic setting.

The following five domains or categories emerged from the participants’ stories and captured the essence of their experiences in the Old Testament course. The domains have provided evidence for how and in what ways their experiences affected their lives: (a) Christian Spiritual Development, (b) Life and Relationship Changes, (c) The Christian-Focused Learning Environment, (d) Transitioning into College Away From Home, and (e) Thoughts on the Future.

Domain 1: Christian Spiritual Development

The participants’ stories resonated with examples of how studying the Old Testament moved them further along in their development as Christians. Ten major themes came together to create this domain: (a) What it means to be a Christian, (b) Internalized beliefs, (c) Spirituality, (d) Faith in God, (e) Meaningful scriptures and Bible stories, (f) Prayer life, (g) Worship, (h) Increased interest and desire to read the Bible, (i) Sharing the Bible with others, (j) Life’s meaning and purpose.

What it Means to be a Christian

The following 6 participants talked about how studying the Old Testament throughout the semester encouraged them to reflect on their daily walk as Christians and what it meant to be a Christian.

Being a Christian is accepting your limitations and acknowledging God's unbounded power—dying daily to try and just offer yourself holy to God because there's nothing that you can do on your own. It is trying to be righteous, even though we can't be righteous, without being arrogant and having faith without, I guess, religion because in religion I automatically wind up with rules. . . . It is letting God make you into something that you were supposed to be but you're not. It's just learning that you're truly loved; you have purpose; you have work; you have value. (Jackie)

I've learned that you can't pick and choose what you believe out of Christianity. Either you are this religion or you are not. So, I think it's one hundred percent believing in the actual teaching of God and what the Bible tells us. It's going to church, following his practices, and doing what Jesus would want you to do. (Maggie)

Elaine defined herself as a “growing” Christian. The required readings in the Bible course raised her awareness about her need for God and for the first time in her life, and she realized, “It's not just a Bible story; it's real!” Because of her experiences in the Old Testament course, she found she was no longer satisfied with where she was in her Christian walk; she wanted to continue finding ways to grow. She stated, “I'm really confident that my class has really encouraged me to search deeper, even when I don't want to sometimes.”

Linda and Arlene shared their thoughts about what it meant to be a Christian. For them, it meant being a follower of Jesus Christ.

To sum it all up, it's having a relationship with Jesus, like a relationship with God, because the reason Jesus was sent by God was to restore us back to him. We were originally created to live a life with God and to have a perfect relationship

with him. That means daily living a life for him and dying to myself. Dying to self means resisting your selfish ambitions and desires. It is really foreign to non-Christians to be like that. (Linda)

To be a Christian is to be a follower of Christ, just to know that and to believe His word and accept Him into your heart. . . . just knowing he did die on the cross for our sins and we don't have to make up for them. We can give them to God and he will forgive us. . . . being a Christian is knowing that, believing that, internalizing that, and taking that into my life, into every aspect of my life. (Arlene)

Hailey believed people often look at Christianity as something they could fall back on in times of need or when it was convenient, only to ignore it again when it got in the way. She learned during the semester being a Christian involved commitment for a life-long journey and “it has nothing to do with what we have already done or will do.” Hailey also stated, “I have learned I must have a relationship with Christ in order to live for him, serve him, and obey his commandments, so that I can become more and more like Christ.”

Internalized Beliefs

While studying the Old Testament, 11 of the 13 participants began internalizing what they were reading, from which they began experiencing a shift toward adopting personal values and beliefs and a change in their motivation to “do the right thing.”

I have attended a religious school all of my life. I think attending a Catholic grade school really focuses on what you should believe and attending this college class is more the background and then you choose what you believe. It [this course] helped me connect the dots. Growing up I was forced to believe this stuff. I was never given an option to believe something else. (Maggie)

I went into this class thinking it was going to be a boring class and that I would do it just to get a grade. But, it's really a lot more than that. I mean, it affects people in different ways. It's given me more insight into things and helped me internalize different values in my life. . . . [When younger] I feared my parents would get mad at me and punish me. I was raised in church, so that's all I knew. But, it didn't mean anything personal to me—it's what my parents believed in. Now, I

am internalizing all of it and it makes sense for my life now! I know God will forgive me when I make mistakes, but I have to learn from the mistakes I make. (Arlene)

Jackie talked about how she once had a distorted understanding of what it meant to fear the Lord. Jackie once believed if she “didn’t do all that was right” God would strike her down. She talked about how she began internalizing God’s love during the semester and how the process had given her a new perspective of having a personal relationship with him, not as a punishing God, but as a redeeming Savior. This changed her self-concept as well, and she stated, “I know that I am human; I know I am going to sin. . . . It’s not the end of the world and that failure is a perfectly normal part of human life. I just have to say, okay, forgive me.”

Karen, Dori, Collette, and Hailey internalized principles, which brought about a change in the motivations behind their actions.

We were given the Old Testament for a reason. . . . going in-depth with the Old Testament has been really nice to see why we were given it. Well, since I wasn’t always a Christian, but I had that consciousness to want to do things right. When I was saved I was like, okay, I have to do things right and this is why I need to do things right. It’s not to avoid punishment now; it’s for myself and for God and my family. (Karen)

When I was little and did something wrong, I believed God would hate me forever. This class has helped me to discover that God is going to love me even if I’m not perfect. . . . You have to figure out through time on your own that what you do doesn’t just play a part in your life; it plays a part in everyone’s life around you. It’s not just me; it’s everyone else and I can’t be self-centered. That’s where it’s [the course] has helped me a lot. (Dori)

When Collette was a young child, she always feared spankings. She stated she kept her behavior “in check” rather than getting a spanking. During all of the time she read and studied the Old Testament, Collette realized, “the more you read God’s word the

more you get into it and he will show you things. . . . His word is what I am now convicted by.” Her motivation to behave how God expects her to behave became front and center for her. She stated, “Now, it’s not living off the relationship that my parents had with God, or because my church did a certain thing—it’s me and God now!” Hailey chose to deal with the consequences when she was younger, but reading and studying the Old Testament, changed that for her.

It [the course] has helped me to stop worrying about society and what society thinks is right and perfect, but the way things should be and to live for Christ and not let those set me back. My mother used to tell me to, ‘do the right thing because it’s the right thing to do.’ I’ve realized that I have had a bad attitude a lot . . . When I was younger, I wanted to get my way, so I did it anyway knowing there’d be consequences. I’ve grown a lot in that and now I would have to say that I do things less in my life for myself than I used to when I was younger. Studying the Bible this semester has helped me internalize God’s word and its principles. (Hailey)

Linda was excited about how God revealed many things to her during the course, as she remarked, “God is working in me from the inside out.” She found she sincerely wanted God to continue changing her heart, so her actions would please him. Prior to the class, Linda tended to seek the approval of others. She stated, “It’s not other people’s approval I seek now; it’s an audience of one.”

As Linda read and studied the scriptures, she recognized something she had internalized during the semester. She stated, “It’s all about living for God but also having the spirit inside of me, so it’s the one guiding me and leading me, giving me God’s desires for my life.” While God’s power and sovereignty was not a new concept to Linda, studying the Old Testament “put things into perspective” for her. She stated, “God’s discipline has definitely given me a fear of him . . . fearful like in awe. . . . realizing, oh

my gosh, God did all of that!” She likened her new awareness to a question David asked on more than one occasion, “Who am I” (1 Samuel 18:8; 2 Samuel 7:18). Because of her class experiences, she sincerely began wanting God’s will for her life and believed that was where she would find the answers to such a question.

Studying the 10 Commandments effected the hearts and minds of Barbara and Felicia.

Although I think it is possible to live purely based on the 10 Commandments and my parents taught me what’s right and wrong, but now I have to decide for myself what’s wrong and what’s right through the wisdom—and when I say wisdom, I mean wisdom. I don’t mean intelligence and I don’t mean pure knowledge. I now live by the rules of love. He commands us to love others, to love him, and I think it’s really important to serve others. I now pray every day that through my actions of love people would see that there is something more to my motives than just that I’m a nice person—that they would see there was something missing in their lives. (Barbara)

It’s [the course] made me think about the one commandment, ‘Thou shalt not put other gods before me’ and about it as people worship literally other gods. But when you think about everything we put in front of God everyday—that is other gods to him—idolizing things like school life, your grades, that big volleyball match coming up. You’re more worried about that than reading your Bible. . . . I have definitely grown and learned a lot about myself and what I need to do. (Felicia)

Spirituality

This theme presents participants’ responses to the interview question about how the study of Old Testament scriptures influenced their spirituality. As part of their responses, all 13 participants offered their definition of what spirituality meant to them as they talked about how studying the scriptures influenced them spiritually.

As part of their definition of spirituality, 8 of the 13 participants described spirituality in terms of having a personal walk and intimate relationship with God, as the

human soul is in communion with God. From their perspective, spiritual development required belief in God, spending time with God in prayer, studying the scriptures, and letting him work through them in their everyday lives. A few participants also made specific references to the Holy Spirit in their definitions, while others believed spirituality could not be defined outside the context of faith.

Spirituality is taking your relationship with God beyond saying things with your mouth to people and actually living a lifestyle that's different. Spirituality is having a personal walk and growth with God. Having a relationship with God, not just saying I'm a Christian but actually spending time with the God you serve. Spirituality—it's about your spirit, obviously, and our spirits, our souls; they're fed by God and by his word. The class has affected me definitely. I've grown a lot spiritually since I started this class. Coming into college as a freshman and making all of these different changes, and getting the independence—it's all come together to help me grow. But, taking this class has also helped me try and understand things in a different way. (Collette)

I think [spirituality] it's your internalization of God, of having God at the center of your heart—having God as your king. It's holding the theocracy in your heart—not only how to internalize it but also externalize it. . . . If it doesn't influence every aspect of your life then you are doing something wrong. . . . I think spirituality can be a *fluff* word. I mean people toss those kinds of words around and mean nothing. . . . Spirituality is *my* walk with the Lord and because of this class, my spirituality has been greatly influenced! (Barbara)

Spirituality is any act that involves you and the Lord. Mine has definitely been changed for the better because of my experiences in the Old Testament course. I realized that I'm going through some of the same things that those people did many, many years before. I just love being able to go to class and learn about God! (Felicia)

It's just your walk with God and just trying to learn more about God by reading the Bible and praying. Spirituality is my relationship with Christ and my faith in him. I think it is also your walk in life and how you carry yourself and how you present your life to others. . . . On my Christian aspect, I'd say it [spirituality] was probably a 7 or 8 and now 8 or 9 since taking this class. (Gail)

Linda and Maggie also made specific references to the spirituality and faith connection. Maggie believed faith and spirituality were much the same. She stated, "It's

back to faith, the faith you have in God. It's having the right mindset about what you believe and believing in God . . . and his teachings." Maggie recognized her spirituality, her faith, had been growing "day-by-day" because of her experiences in the Old Testament course. Linda connected her spirituality to her faith and personal relationship with God. She believed everything she learned during the semester drove biblical truths deeper into her spirit. Linda's excitement grew during the interview as she talked about her experiences with studying the scriptures for class, as she stated, "We need a Savior. I will remember this the rest of my life, but I will also remember this time in my life and how this class poured into me!" Jackie and Hailey commented about the Holy Spirit as a component of their spirituality.

Spirituality is getting over your humanness and letting the Holy Spirit work through you. The fruit of the spirit is not something that we do; it is something that is given to us. . . . The Bible is a spiritual reference; it's a history of people and their poetry. . . . Studying the Bible this semester has spoken to me spiritually and intellectually. . . . One thing that struck me one day while I was thinking about Psalm 139 is that we all have the image of God. . . . You can look at one person and no person is ever alike and neither is God's spirit. Just understanding how personal he is—it's mind boggling!" (Jackie)

I'd have to say the Holy Spirit would be the main focus of that [spirituality]. The fact that when you get saved the Holy Spirit comes and lives inside of you, spirituality would be him living inside. Instead of living in the flesh it would be the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit enables you to get a lot closer to him [God]. . . . through the Holy Spirit I'm able to actually have conversations with God and be closer to him. I've grown a great deal spiritually because of the class and the overall environment. (Hailey)

During the semester, Arlene and Elaine realized a deep yearning to grow spiritually. Arlene stated, "My spirituality has grown tremendously" and she sensed a longing in her spirit to draw even closer to God. During the semester, Arlene decided if she wanted to continue growing spiritually it was up to her. She stated, "It's letting him

lead me in the ways I need to go; being in his word; letting him speak and direct my life!”

To Elaine, spirituality connected her to God in an intimate friendship.

Spirituality is your deep relationship with God. That’s your friendship. It’s not only the knowledge or the prayers, but it’s the deeper side of that. It’s your soul talking to God. . . . It [spirituality] has been challenged; it’s been affirmed. It’s grown and I yearn more for it. (Elaine)

Faith in God

When the participants were asked if their theology had been influenced while taking the Old Testament course, all 13 of them talked about how their belief and faith in God had been strengthened. I asked the participants to define what having faith meant to them and to give an example of how their faith had been affected.

One definition of faith comes from the Hebrews 11:1. “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not yet seen.” Although the participants shared a personal definition of what faith meant to them, there were threads of this scripture in nearly all of statements. There was also the tendency to connect faith with having trust or accepting forgiveness.

For instance, Hailey stated, “Faith means you have to trust that God is who he says he is and Jesus Christ is the Messiah. I know I’m not able to comprehend all of it; it’s beyond my mind.” Linda stated having faith meant “trusting in what you can’t see.” Gail tied her understanding of faith to “following what God has planned for us without having to ask questions wondering why we are doing what we are doing. . . . We have to have faith and believe without seeing God.” Felicia and Jackie had this to say:

Faith is believing what you can’t see—that’s for sure. . . . And sometimes it’s hard to see God, but just believing, knowing that he’s there and that he’ll be there no matter what. You have to trust him. . . . My faith is growing stronger because I

am learning about how everything happened in the Old Testament, how people who didn't have faith in God, and seeing all of the consequences. . . . What God says comes true and we see it in the Old Testament. Each lesson we learned about how people need to have faith in God and listen to him and obey him. . . . I feel I've matured by learning the Old Testament. (Felicia)

Faith is being able to fully one hundred percent trust in something even if you aren't fully aware of the outcome. Learning to trust whole-heartedly even when you don't understand something such as predestination and free will; they both coexist at the same time. . . . We wouldn't be able to comprehend it; we don't understand it. . . . So, it's just learning to live within our limitations while still trusting him. . . . I have been able to question here and this was completely new. I was able to solidify it. (Jackie)

Maggie stated faith was "believing God and believing in his teachings, believing in his words, believing the Bible." When asked if her faith had been influenced by taking the Bible course, Maggie answered, "Yes, it makes me want to be a better person and actually understand the teachings better instead of just believing what I've been told." While talking about how studying the Old Testament influenced her faith, Linda spoke confidently about how her faith had grown because of the course and stated, "It's grown my knowledge of God and to believe him more." Linda continued to talk about how she realized during class one day that worldly things would not bring her true happiness or satisfaction in life. She paraphrased Jeremiah 29:13 as, "You'll seek me and find me when you seek me with all of your heart." Linda stated, "I now feel like every time I seek God I find him. Even though you can't feel him, he's always real."

Irene and Elaine believe their faith got much stronger because of their experiences in the Old Testament course.

Faith is when you believe in something you don't see and for me that's when God is like in action in the world, or when you don't have physical proof with your eyes . . . or have every single part of it backed up with evidence. You just believe. . . . Faith is also part of knowing that you are forgiven and accepting that

forgiveness. . . [My faith] it's stronger because I know more about it and about the beliefs that are in my faith and what I particularly believe. . . . studying and meeting some of the people has helped my faith grow stronger. It's helped a whole lot because I hadn't ever been in an atmosphere that has actually gotten into the Word as much. (Irene)

You can't see God, so you have to have faith. You have God but faith is being content with stuff that you may not fully understand and having good reasoning behind it. My faith has definitely gotten stronger. I've had to rely more on faith as I have dug into things. (Elaine)

Dori stated, faith was “bigger than what we see as individuals. Faith involves being God's instrument and letting him use you.” When Dori first began the Old Testament course, her sole motivation was to earn an “A” for the course. By the end of the course, she wanted to “get the meaning” of what she was learning. Dori stated her faith had “gotten a lot stronger” and she intended to walk more by faith as she continued seeking God in life. Barbara had this to say:

This class has really taught me to just sit back and know that the Lord is providing for me whether I see it or not. He's answering my prayers whether they are in the way I want them or not; and I just need to listen and fully immerse myself in him and what he wants me to do and what he wants me to say because you can't live with other kings in your life. Faith is believing without seeing but I don't ever minister to people on faith. You don't have to. There's so much evidence. People want good evidence and the Bible, especially the Old Testament, is purely historical. How can you read that and how can you sit in class and tell me that you still don't believe. . . .I know he's going to work things out and I'm going to do all that I can do with every fiber of my being and then know that God is going to do the rest. God isn't going to write my papers—that's irrational. Instead, I have faith that if I use the tools God has given me and use the time God has given me wisely, and use the knowledge and the brain God has given me, I can do it. (Barbara)

Arlene started putting her faith and trust in God like never before. She came to believe her faith had “grown tremendously” since taking the course. She stated, “He's going to get me through everything, like throughout my tough times as a college student.

. . .knowing that he is always there!” Before studying the Old Testament, Arlene commented about her tendency to live life through her parents’ faith. By the end of the course, she had internalized principles for her own faith in God.

Collette defined faith as “simply believing in God whenever your gut is telling you something different.” She stated her “faith has really grown, [because] the Old Testament shows” a faithful God. She realized during the Bible course “you have to go by what you know from God’s word. . . . we have to believe even when we don’t want to.” Collette seemed to capture the essence of having faith from the Christian perspective when she stated, “I think it’s faith whenever you can just say, I have no power here God and I don’t understand it all, but [God] you know.”

The Old Testament course helped Karen to exercise her faith during times she did not understand everything—when nothing seemed to make sense to her. Karen defined faith as “never doubting, never giving up, just having faith in everything. . . .just having faith that is unshakeable.” Shortly after the start of the semester, Karen lost her father to a terminal illness. She admitted it shook her faith for a while and studying the scriptures during the semester was hard at times; but God’s faithfulness throughout the Old Testament was a source of strength for her. Karen stated, “My dad had faith in the Lord that he would get another breath and that God would take care of him in this life and the next. That’s where my faith is now too.” During the term, Karen recognized she had developed more boldness to share God’s word with others, which became a measure of growth for her faith development.

Meaningful Scriptures and Bible Stories

One of the questions during the interview asked participants if any assignments or class experiences particularly stood out for them during their time in the Old Testament course. Overwhelmingly, the life of David and The Book of Genesis, especially the story of creation, were the most cited meaningful reading assignments or lessons. The participants expressed a heightened awareness of a personal connection with God as they learned of his faithfulness, forgiveness, mercy, justice, provisions, and protection through the stories of the creation and David as well as Noah and Daniel.

David and God's forgiveness. The life of David became meaningful for 7 out of the 13 participants, because they saw him for the first time as a human being, one called and abundantly blessed by God, but one who failed many times. The lessons they learned were about God's forgiveness and faithfulness. As recorded in I Samuel 13:14, God chose David to serve as King, because he "wanted a man after his own heart." The students learned, sometimes for the first time, how David made several unwise decisions.

Most of the time you hear about David's rise to power, but I hadn't heard that during his time as king he actually had to leave the country. . . . I've heard of Saul's failings but not David's. . . . I will definitely remember David and how his son rebelled against him and his adultery with Bathsheba and how all of that ended up. (Irene)

Irene continued to talk about how David, who was a great king, failed God. She found it to be an interesting twist and stated, "God still loved him and had him carry the throne to pass to the child he had with Bathsheba" realizing God did not condemn David, but forgave him. It was meaningful for her to learn David sinned and about how God still blessed him because he repented. I asked Irene if she found herself connecting what she

learned about David to everyday life and she said one of the connections she made had to do with fathers today. She stated, “David, as a father figure, did not know how to talk or deal with his son. It relates to a lot of fathers now because they don’t always know what to say or what to do.”

Several students referred to David as being a “man after God’s own heart.”

Others, such as Hailey, believed the story of David provided a parenting lesson as well.

David, even being a man after God’s own heart, still failed. Basically, the main thing that keeps coming back to my head when I am reading the Old Testament is that we need a Savior. . . . We are not perfect. The people of the Old Testament begged for laws and they still did not live by them. That cycle keeps going on.
(Hailey)

The story and life of David became “real” to Gail during her studies. She stated, “David was a man after God’s own heart but he still messed up, so I know if we mess up God still loves us and we are still his people.” Maggie experienced the same revelation while reading about David. She remembered hearing about how David rose from being a simple shepherd boy to becoming the anointed king, but she never knew about his failures. Maggie stated, “I fail and make mistakes and if God can name him king . . . and he made all of those mistakes then little o’ me . . . I’ll be okay too and he will forgive me.”

Dori talked about how she processed and reflected on the lessons learned from the life of David. During her studies she learned, “Evil can override us, you know, and we have to pay the consequences, but God brings us together as a family. His motive is not to crush us.”

Barbara and Collette also talked about how meaningful the story of David became to them during the class. They related to the life of David, his vulnerability, and his mistakes. God's faithfulness and forgiveness became tangible to them.

David is my favorite person in the Bible because he reminds me of myself. He loved the Lord and was a man after God's own heart. I desire to see God's face just like David desired. . . . Yet, David was a hypocrite. He messed up but faced the consequences, just like I have to face them. . . . The Lord was faithful to Israel. . . . I have realized I am Israel. That shows me how he provides for me, whether I am faithful or not. (Barbara)

I read some of these stories and I'm moved more and more by them. One story that gripped my heart was the story of Tamar and how she was raped by her brother. It was David's responsibility; he should have taken responsibility to punish Amnon for what he did to his daughter but he took no action. . . . The story of David, for me, is very encouraging because he really messed up big time and sometimes he was even ignorant to his own failure. . . . That's just encouraging to me even when I fail, even when I do mess up, God still forgives me. I mean, he forgave David and kept on blessing his kingdom even after he had someone killed. In our eyes, in society's eyes, that's not excusable; but that just shows how merciful God is. . . . I'm now seeing David as a human character. . . . The Bible is also teaching us a lesson about parenting. (Collette)

Creation. The Book of Genesis, especially the story of creation, became "much more meaningful" to Gail and Hailey. Six other participants found these readings stimulating and enjoyable as they shared similar experiences about their studies of the Book of Genesis and the story of God's creation. Maggie said, "I was always told that Adam and Eve was just a story, a story to get children interested. Now, I know it's not just a story." Her attitudes and belief about creation changed because of her experiences in the Old Testament class. She stated, "I now believe in more of what the Bible says." Linda stated, she "really liked the Book of Genesis, which explains creation and how God created everything to be perfect." Although she talked about how Adam and Eve's choice to disobey God ended God's intended life for them, Linda personalized the lesson she

took away from this as she personally related to Adam and Eve. Linda stated, “Things went wrong because we all turn away from him.” Linda asked if she could pull out her Bible from her backpack during the interview, so she could refer to it as needed.

While asking the participants to talk about the assignments or scriptures that had become more meaningful to them during the term, I also asked if they found themselves making any connections between the stories and scriptures they learned to other activities they were involved in during the term. Interestingly, the evening before her interview, Elaine made such a connection with her studies of creation. She and her roommate were fixing dinner, which included sweet potatoes. She remembered stating to her roommate, “God created this ugly thing that was in the ground and now we are going to eat it.” I asked her why that was so meaningful to her. Elaine stated, “I have so much more appreciation for little things in life now because of this class.”

Collette had a similar epiphany in that she realized throughout the term she had developed “a heightened appreciation for God’s creation and the beauty in the world” because of studying the Book of Genesis, including all of the time she spent working on assignments for the Old Testament course.

Arlene made a connection between her upcoming career as a biology teacher and the story of creation. Arlene stated, “[I have] always believed in creation, but the study of Genesis confirmed it and will help me teach biology.” Arlene also commented on how it amazed her to learn about how faithful God was throughout the Old Testament.

Other meaningful stories. For another student, it was the story of Noah and the flood that helped reveal God in a more meaningful and personal way.

I never enjoyed reading Genesis before because after the first five or six chapters it's boring; it was just history. . . . in the past I always thought that was cool how he sent the rainbow for Noah, but I couldn't have cared less—it was for Noah. What does it have to do with me? Now, as I read it, it says to me, it's not just a sign for Noah or whoever was there at the time; it's a sign to everyone for the rest of our lives. . . . I have also thought of the rainbow as a sign of God's disappointment because of what he had to do. He had to flood the whole earth because his people were not faithful to him as he was faithful to them. . . . It makes me cry because I was in his mind when he showed the first rainbow. So, every time I see a rainbow now, or every time it rains, that's what I think about. I know I am being thought of. (Barbara)

The story of Daniel became more meaningful to Dori and Arlene. Dori talked about how the story of Daniel became her favorite reading during the term; she read it and re-read it several times because it showed “God is really there to protect you and he's always going to be there.” Arlene also saw Daniel in a different light because of “how he honored God in everything and how he wanted everything for God's glory,” which is something Arlene now wants to do as well.

Barbara mentioned how story after story in the Old Testament pointed to God's never ending faithfulness and provisions for his people. Her thoughts echoed the thoughts of many of the students.

There are so many things that we could worry about and let rule our lives and I think this is also something that my experiences in the Old Testament class has helped me not to do and that is worry so much. . . . He is faithful. He is going to provide. I have confidence that though the Lord is a just God, he is also a merciful God. . . . The whole entire Old Testament was based on a bunch of covenants, a bunch of promises between the Lord and us. I seriously now love the Old Testament and I have to base my life on his promises and his promise that he will provide for me and that he will be faithful even when I'm not being faithful to him. (Barbara)

Prayer Life

The participants responded to a question about how their experiences in the Bible class may have affected their prayer life. Twelve of the 13 participants spoke about how the course had enhanced their prayer life. They found their approach to prayer had changed; it had become more mature, intimate, and conversational. Five of the 13 participants reported they prayed much more often now because of what they read about in the Old Testament course. Only Maggie stated, “It’s just something quick in my head that I’ll do and I don’t think that’s changed much.” Linda had this to say:

This course has given me more to pray about. I sometimes bring my journal to class and start journaling down stuff and it’s led me to pray about more things. Because if Dr. Chambers says something I’m like, Oh my gosh this speaks to me, and I want to take it to God right away. . . . I write out my prayers because it gives me focus. . . . I’ve been poured into more by this class, so I want to get it out to God more. . . . I’ve been more faithful about praying. (Linda)

Collette believed her prayer life became more important to her during the semester and stated, “God is on my mind throughout the day.” She found herself praying often throughout the day, sometimes from a list and sometimes about things she believed God showed her she needed to pray about. For the first time in her life, Collette started praying over the scriptures as she read them, asking God to help her understand the scriptures better so she could “make them applicable” to her life. Reading the Old Testament affected Jackie and Hailey’s prayer life as well.

Now, I would say that I try to attune myself, for a lack of a better word, to God’s presence where I actually take time aside to pray. Now when I do pray I try to do it with as much of an open spirit as I can and look at God in the triune form and not just Jesus, not just God, not just the Holy Spirit, but understanding he is one. (Jackie)

My prayer life has changed. I've never really worked on my prayer life at all before now. . . . it has definitely been a spiritual growth. . . . It's helped me lean on God a lot more and realize I need to pray more. . . . It's definitely helped me think about God more throughout the day as opposed to maybe praying for meals or just before I go to bed. I have felt so far away sometimes from God in my life. . . . but I now know I can talk to God and tell him that I feel far away. (Hailey)

During the semester, Barbara, Arlene, and Dori realized prayer no longer had to be a formal process; they could engage in a conversation with God, just talk to him like they would a best friend. Barbara stated, "I've realized it's a conversational relationship, and just like with a best friend you don't just tell all of your problems, I know I have to listen." Barbara is confident in what she has learned during the course and stated, "It's made my life easier now and it makes me feel better about myself." Arlene realized she did not have to get down on her knees to pray and remarked, "I feel if something happens now I can just talk to him about it." Dori has always prayed but because of what she learned in the Old Testament course, she knows her prayer life "has advanced" because now she not only prays for herself and family but also for those around her, instead of "being self-centered" in her prayers.

This class has enhanced my prayer life by praying more. The Old Testament certainly shows that God wanted his people to pray. . . . throughout the whole Old Testament. They would be great and then start dwindling, and then call out for him. This is evident in our culture today and in my life. . . . We are still his people, and still human, and still have sin in the world. We have to call out to him and have to pray constantly. . . . Prayer isn't just, help me with this, help me with that; it's building a relationship. . . . A lot of people don't know how to start to pray, but it's just not really about asking, it's forming your relationship. (Elaine)

It all leads back to the cycle stories when people got away from God. It makes me realize that we always should be talking to God. . . . It should be the easiest thing to turn to God in everything, but it's not always the case. . . . Just this semester I decided I would set my alarm, my ringtones by Holy is the Lord, as a wake-up alarm to play devotional music, and it helps prepare me to pray on my walk to class. . . . It's just influenced my prayer life like when I'm having problems, it

should hit me that I, I'm not praying so much and I just need to always be talking to God. (Felicia)

Irene believed her prayers flowed much better and became more understandable, as she stated, “[They] carry through and follow through more on my thoughts now. It’s definitely a bit more mature.” For Gail, her prayer life “became bolder just realizing that we are just talking to God and that we shouldn’t be embarrassed about what we are saying.” Karen stopped praying for a while after the loss of her father, but being in the Old Testament course helped her to begin praying again. She stated, “I know now this is what God wants for me—keep going, living!”

Worship

The participants responded to a question about how their experiences during the semester in the Old Testament course may have affected their worship as a Christian. During the semester, 8 of the 13 participants recognized their expressions of worship had changed during the semester. For some, this meant they sensed a new maturity in their approach to worship; for others their expressions of worship had become more bold and outgoing.

The Old Testament course brought me closer to God. It’s made me realize that I really need to get back on track with him. It has given me more freedom to sing out and praise God during worship times. (Felicia)

I have more freedom and boldness to worship God. I believe if we are doing it with the right motivation out of our heart, then God can use it to bless others and help them to become more bold and change how they worship the Lord too. (Hailey)

I feel like I have grown a lot in my worship since the beginning of the school year. I think the class, just learning about how David worshipped God, or just even the people in the tabernacle and the priests, has shown me just how sacred God’s presence really is! . . . I think today that is something that has been lost

today—how sacred God’s presence is. . . . I could now sing and worship all day long. . . . That’s one way I love to worship God. I also think just trying to live for him daily and being honest with him is a form of worship because it shows I believe what he says. . . . It’s having faith in what he has promised in his word and being faithful to God. I think that can be worship by just saying you mean enough to me to live for you every day. (Collette)

For Gail and Linda, they found a new purpose in their worship because they learned in the Old Testament about how God loves praise and worship.

It has affected my worship. I know at my home church I am not usually very outgoing in my worship, but I think it’s gotten more outgoing lately. I’m not afraid to worship now. Just learning about how much God enjoys it and loves it [worship]; it’s giving me pleasure by giving pleasure to God. (Gail)

I’ve felt more free and bold to do it—just to praise God and give him glory. . . . How awesome God must feel to look down and see people bowing down to him and singing praises to him! (Linda)

Irene believed her worship became “deeper” because she studied the Old Testament. She stated, “I like to close my eyes now because I can get distracted by little things. I stand up more now and I sing louder now too.” Irene attributed her new boldness in worship to learning the scriptures. In contrast, Dori believed studying the Old Testament led her to being more silent and listening to God as a deeper more intimate form of worship. She described recent instances where she realized she was worshipping God through all things and in every aspect of her life. “Now, when I’m power walking, I notice the world around me and what God has brought to us, and it’s beautiful.” Jackie made a similar connection when she said, “This course has given me things to worship about!”

Interest and Desire to Read the Bible

I asked the students if the Old Testament course made any difference in their desire or interest in reading the Bible. Eleven of the 13 students believed the requirement to take the Old Testament course affected their long-term desire to read the Bible. Arlene stated, “It has greatly increased my interest in reading the Bible.” Gail read things in the Bible she had never heard before and found them quite interesting. She remarked, “It’s peaked my interest and I will probably keep reading it.”

I’m an information digger; I love knowing everything. I have a desire to know God; but sometimes picking up the Bible had been a struggle. This class helped me because it intrigues me intellectually and you know God’s word will not return void. . . . Dr. Chambers often pointed out things I already knew but I took way too much for granted before taking this course. . . . This course is of tremendous value, just invaluable! (Jackie)

Elaine, Karen, and Linda responded with “yes” to the question. Because of the course, Elaine believed she was more committed than ever before to reading and studying scripture. She estimated her ongoing reading and study time was “100% greater” than before she took the class. Karen believed the course helped her establish a life-long study routine. “I loved this class! Studying the Bible is helping me see the big picture. . . . everything you need to know is in the Bible.” Linda had been waiting to take such a course.

Yes! This is what I have been waiting for—to go to class and learn about the Bible. You can’t just open up the Bible and try to take from it what you want to hear. You have to look at what God was saying to his people and then from that God is going to speak to you. You can’t make up or seek what you want to find because God is the one that has to reveal stuff to you. . . . I’m going to continue taking more classes like this now. (Linda)

Both Dori and Barbara tried to read the Bible before taking the course, but often wound up frustrated. Dori stated, “Oh, I used to be like, it’s so many pages to read or oh my God what am I going to do. Now, it’s not that I have to read it, I want to read it!” Dori further remarked she had developed a new routine for reading and studying the Bible because of her time in the course. For Barbara, being in the course ignited a new passion within her for reading the Bible.

My experiences in this class have greatly affected the way I view the Bible. I was one who tried to read the Old Testament a couple of times and got frustrated and it was like, there’s no point! Why was this written, besides just historically? Dr. Chambers’ passion . . . enlightened me and I saw not only was there a historical perspective but also a theological perspective and that each book was carefully written and when it’s all put together, there is rhyme and reason and a specific pattern God wanted us to see. You can apply it to everyday life. Applying his [Dr. Chambers] passion has ignited my passion and I enjoy reading the Bible more now. (Barbara)

Collette found she began yearning for more of the Bible, because “this class has provoked me to learn more about the scriptures.” Felicia admitted, “The Old Testament wasn’t always the most fun to read.” Because the course helped her understand it better, she found real enjoyment reading and studying the Old Testament scriptures. Felicia stated, “I think the Old Testament is really important to involve in your every day study of the Bible. Now that I understand it, I will probably pursue more of it.” Irene reported the Old Testament course inspired her and greatly increased her desire to read and study scripture. She stated, “It is God’s word, it is more sacred I guess to read it now.”

Sharing Scripture and Class Experiences with Others

As the participants responded to the open-ended question about how, if at all, the Bible course had affected their lives, a consistent theme emerged early on. Ten

participants reflected on how their participation in the course opened doors and enabled them to share what they were learning in class with others, especially family and friends.

Jackie especially enjoyed sharing God's word with non-Christians.

It brings up discussion points that I really didn't have before. . . . I love having non-Christian friends—I love it. . . . It helps me to understand them more and love them more as I should because God commanded me to because I am no better than they are. . . . [The Bible course] really opened up doors and then I can bring in the Old Testament things and just other various Bible knowledge. (Jackie)

During the semester, Arlene started carrying scriptures in her purse to aid her in offering scriptural support to others. Prior to the course, Arlene was intimidated to talk about the Bible with others about. She believed the Bible knowledge she gained over the semester increased her confidence to speak more authoritatively about God's word.

Collette took advantage of an opportunity on campus one day during the semester and interrupted students whom she overheard discussing the biblical concept of "guarding one's heart". She told them, "God had just given me an understanding the night before on that Bible scripture" and she proceeded to discuss it with the students. Collette engaged in a meaningful discussion with this group of students and shared her insights with them—something she would not have done prior to her experiences in the Old Testament course.

Throughout the semester, Karen looked forward to sharing the Bible stories and scriptures "all of the time" with her boyfriend. Prior to taking the Old Testament course,

Karen did not believe she had enough Bible knowledge to feel comfortable doing so.

Karen reflected on everything she learned in the Old Testament and how it gave her "a lot more confidence to talk about the Bible."

The Bible course also gave Elaine opportunities to share God, especially with her roommate who had not yet taken the course.

It's a little nerve wrecking and heartwarming because I don't want to do anything wrong. You can't go wrong with the Bible. Sometimes it challenges me because she would ask me a question about something, like, let me get back to you on that one. . . . We did six stories that night; I didn't get any homework done; and you know she said afterwards, 'like that's, that's all real. That really happened; there was really a donkey that talked' Studying the Old Testament has raised more questions but it's made me know I do believe that; it's affirmed it. (Elaine)

Felicia and Dori found a real boldness for sharing God's word they never had before. During her studies, Felicia developed a stronger desire to bring others to know God. She stated, "I do feel like God wants me to help people in my life." Dori used what she has learned in the class to help others. Because of her own experiences during the semester, Dori started encouraging students to "take time to listen to God." She remarked, "There are a lot of incidents in the Bible where his people quit listening to him." Dori often connected the importance of listening to God to how the Israelites paid the consequences when they stopped listening to him. Dori and Maggie greatly appreciated the safe environment of the Christian campus to share the Bible and their class experiences with others. Although Maggie attended Christian schools growing up and was required to take religion classes, she never talked about the Bible with other students or friends until "being on this campus."

Hailey was raised in a Christian home but had "never done a detailed study of the Bible anywhere" before taking the Old Testament course. She gave a recount of an experience she had with her mother the night before her interview, reflecting on how she

and her mother talked at length on the phone about scriptures, something the two of them had not done before.

We never really talked that much about the Bible. . . . but I just had about a 2 hour-long conversation with my mom on the way back from coming home . . . last night. . . . my mom and I were just talking about what it means to live like Christ because a lot of people think Christians are fake because they put on this mask and try to be perfect . . . when really it's just trying to live for Christ. . . . a really long discussion about that, which was really awesome. (Hailey)

Although Gail's dad was a minister, she had not studied the Bible much nor had she engaged in discussions about the Bible with either one of her parents before taking the Old Testament course. During the semester, Gail began talking to her parents, especially her dad, about things she did not understand instead of trying to "figure it out" on her own. Gail and her father started talking about developing a Bible study ministry together after she graduates. During the semester, Gail also became more aware she should share the Lord with others. Gail stated, "It's helped me to see that I need talk more to my friends, you know, about God and everything." Barbara also found a new passion for "reaching out to those people who really aren't interested. Some think it's illogical to believe in, you know someone up there. But, I think it's illogical not to!"

Meaning and Purpose

The Old Testament Bible course raised the participants' awareness of meaning and purpose in their lives. The common theme expressed by 10 of the 13 participants involved recognizing their meaning in life was drawn from sensing God's call on their lives to tell others about him and act as his agent to help others. Their experiences in the course helped them sort out who they were and they recognized how a personal

relationship with God brought real purpose and meaning to their lives. Elaine, Barbara, and Karen had this to say:

This course just solidified any doubts I had about who God is and what his great power is because of creation. It has just solidified what I have grown to believe about who I am and what my purpose is. My purpose is to be his child and to grow as that and to worship and love life through him! All of this has really solidified what my goal in life is, and that is God! (Elaine)

I know I am now here to serve—that's my purpose in life. People may say you can't boil it down but you can—it's serving. We learned about the five eras in the Old Testament. I know now that God gave me a purpose in the first era. He created Israel; he created me! Why would God create us to walk aimlessly? People say you can't find truth; you can't find purpose, but it's right there! He created us to love and to serve. (Barbara)

I think he [God] put me on this earth to be bold in my faith—getting up every morning knowing that I have a purpose and not just getting up doing the daily routine like a lot of people. (Karen)

For the majority of the students their experiences in the Old Testament course motivated them to seek God's will earnestly for their lives. For instance, Dori talked how her experiences in the course moved her toward wanting to know more about what God's plan was for her life. She realized while studying the Bible the quest for meaning and purpose in life really involved "a journey." Because of her experiences in the Bible course, she had the opportunity to reach out and help others. Dori found by helping others with their problems and helping them grow closer to God it brought great meaning and purpose to her life during the semester. "I believe I can now do anything as long as I have God. It's kind of like if I do it in light of him, it's the right thing!" Irene found she wanted to seek God's plan for her life, knowing it would bring meaning and purpose to everything in her life, now and in the future.

It's [this class] kind of solidified it a bit more—what I am supposed to be able to do for God and that he knows what the plan is for my life. I may think I'm going to do something, but now I'm not going to do it unless it's part of his plan for me. Right now, the purpose for this time of my life is to learn and study and excel in my studies for him. That's glorifying him by using what I have and by being there for other people around me. (Irene)

Felicia's experiences in the class and studying the Old Testament helped her to discover meaning in her life and a purpose she never before considered. She stated, "We're here to live and die for God." Felicia talked about how God's word and Dr. Chambers influenced her during the semester and about how others in the class helped her as well. She stated, "I now know that God wants me to help people. . . . help people in a rewarding job." During the semester, Jackie discovered meaning and purpose was "being able to do something and contribute back to society in a very healthy way."

Before taking the Old Testament course, Arlene stated, "I never considered God in my plan at all." Her purpose before taking the course was, "just to get through school, just survive." Prior to her experiences in the course, meaning in life for her was drawn from external relationships and partying with friends until she could finish her degree and become a biology teacher. She remarked, "I got my purpose from what I thought I needed to get done—just from my plan." While studying the Old Testament for class, Arlene discovered "God has a plan for me and you and you just have to find his plan." During the course, Arlene discovered by praying about and pursuing the plan God had for her life, she began to sense real meaning in her life. She developed a desire "to serve God in everything" and wanted to share the information with all of her friends, so they too could follow God's path for their lives.

Linda remarked she believed, as a Christian, she would find real meaning and purpose by having a mission in life to serve God. The Old Testament course encouraged her to contemplate having such a mission. When describing what she believed her mission was at this time in her life, Linda paraphrased Deuteronomy 6:5 as, “To love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, and with all of your strength.” Linda described her understanding of this scripture as “putting God above all things and dying to myself.” Gail remarked she found meaning in life because of “God, going to church, and being in God’s presence.” The Old Testament helped Gail to realize that God had a purpose for her life. She stated, “Learning about how God called Israel, it showed me that God has a call on his people and so I know that God has a call for me.”

Domain 2: Life and Relationship Changes

As the participants reflected on how or in what ways their experiences in the Old Testament course affected their lives, a second domain emerged. The participants identified some major changes they experienced during the semester. Four major themes came together to create this domain: (a) Behaviors, (b) Physical and Emotional Health, (c) Attitudes, and (d) Relationships.

Behaviors

Four participants reported having some major changes in regards to drinking, language, or the type of music they played.

I was more the typical college student 4 months ago. I just worked, played, went to school, and hung out with friends. Now, I do think of things very differently. It’s like, why do you have to go to parties every weekend? Why do you have to do all that? Is it really fun? Is it worth it, especially with the drinking and driving. . . . it’s just not worth it to have a drink and have to drive home drunk. . . . I was at a school where that was what you did—you went out on the weekends and you

drank; but here, it's let's go study in a Bible group. You know, drinking just takes such a toll on your body and all the consequences that can come from it. . . . I have matured. . . . I do think about how I wish this class had come earlier in my life. . . . I guess it made me think about how I can change myself. . . .you know, drinking as a college student. God doesn't want that for me. (Maggie)

God's word, it's really changed me a lot. . . just like my plans for the weekends. . . . normally I would have gone out and I would be drinking; I would be partying, but now I'm the DD [designated driver] and I'm going to make sure that everyone's okay. Like, that's a big step for me. . . I'm proud of myself. . . . I want to use my body to glorify God and not take advantage of the body God gave me. . . . lately especially, I have been changing my music. I used to always listen to. . . . not bad music; it just did not honor God. (Arlene)

Irene believed studying the Bible motivated her to make noticeable changes in her language. She attributed this change in behavior to recognizing the sacredness of God's word. Dori found spiritual help to control her anger.

A noticeable change is language. One of the commandments is to not take the Lord's name in vain, but I now carry that over more into my cuss words in general. . . It's not fear of consequences any more or punishments. . . I guess it's love; I want to do it because of his love for me and everything that I know he has done for me even though I am only one person. (Irene)

Coming here and this class has made me realize even more 'cause I never sat down and took the time back home to really understand like God was molding me. . . . just to understand who I truly am becoming and it's been kind of nice because I can get through situations now much easier. . . and learned how to contain myself at times even when I just want to have outrage. (Dori)

Physical and Emotional Health

Because of Bible scriptures learned during the course, Barbara, Linda, and Collette found themselves thinking about their health and bodies.

I think about my body as a temple of God and I believe that we as Christians should eat healthy or do something to benefit our body. I need to eat right. I need to get adequate amount of sleep. Oh, and time management. I mean, it has really affected all of those things in my life. (Barbara)

I guess the things I've focused on are sleep and I'm pretty bad about like nutrition or what I eat so I should focus on that more. There's verses that say your body is a temple of the living God. . . . I have focused on sleep because I realized this semester that if I don't get much sleep then that leads to me having a bad attitude. So, in order to help myself have a better attitude I've learned I need to take care of myself and get rest. (Linda)

God has shown me that he wants me to take care of his, the temple, you know, the living temple of God. I found biblical support for that and if you look at the story of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, how they wouldn't eat the king's fattening foods and wouldn't drink his wine. They only ate vegetables and took care of their bodies. . . . because they did that, God gave them so much favor. (Collette)

Dori believed she had become more emotionally healthy because of studying the Bible. Before taking the class, she had reigned on expressing how she felt to others.

I've actually opened up a lot. At home, I always wanted to be the strong person, like during funerals I would never cry. I would just sit there. I would hold it in and be there for my parents, be there for other family members. And now, I've become such an emotional person. I've learned that God gave us these feelings and it's healthy to let it out. (Dori)

Attitudes

Six of the participants recognized they had some attitude changes during the semester. Dori and Barbara found self-acceptance because of their Bible readings.

Barbara also became less judgmental.

What I have learned in this class makes me realize, I am who I am and I like who I am. I was really hurting my parents like telling them, oh, I don't like myself. . . . I've learned to love myself. . . . I feel like I can do anything as long as I have God. (Dori)

Here's another lesson this class has taught me, not to be judgmental because I used to be very judgmental. . . . I definitely know that I have grown a lot, and I've grown a lot from gaining intelligence from being in the class because it's taught me, it's shown me other perspectives. . . . it's not my job to dictate other people's lives. . . . The Old Testament has really helped me with my personal walk, which has helped my attitude towards other classes. . . . You can find value in whatever class you're in because the Bible says, you know, whatever you do, do it to the

glory of God. . . . I've realized, you know, the course has changed my attitude and whatever I do now, I am going to be happy as long as I do it for the glory of God. (Barbara)

Hailey experienced a change of attitude about her body image during the term and started sensing a stronger self-worth. Body image was something she had struggled with most of her life. She stated, "The course has encouraged me that we are made in the image of God and the fact that we are made in the image of God means we're not worthless." She believed the change of attitude helped her a great deal during her first semester of college, which increased her desire to help others move toward self-acceptance rather than focusing on their bodies. Because of the lessons she learned in her Old Testament studies, when Hailey finds herself around people making negative statements about themselves, she started encouraging them to think about how they were made in the image of God.

Linda made a commitment to work on her bad attitudes during athletic practices with her teammates and to become less judgmental. During her Old Testament studies, Arlene recognized her need to "control" and "fix" things on her own. Reading and studying the Bible encouraged her to change her attitudes and she began earnestly seeking God's help to develop an accepting attitude towards others, especially members on her athletic team. She began meditating on God's word and the words in Christian songs to see how she could apply them to her life. She had this to say:

I can often get bad attitudes at practice, which makes a huge conflict in my heart because I want to be glorifying God; and I want to be a light at practice and I want people to see me not as a hypocritical Christian. . . . Now, I definitely try to spend time with God and have him into my heart before practice. (Linda)

Elaine summed up the changes in her attitudes and behavior by saying, “The class has definitely awakened me to being aware of how I think, how I act, and how I dress.”

Relationships

As the participants reflected on how or in what ways studying the Old Testament may have affected their interpersonal relationships, 6 students shared their thoughts about how they experienced improved family relationships, especially with their parents. Four participants shared their thoughts about how studying the Bible had affected relationships with friends or just their overall interpersonal relationships with others.

Jackie believed studying the Old Testament, and the little things Dr. Chambers shared during lecture, helped her relationship with her parents. She stated, “I had a very up and down relationship with my parents. . . . but, I'm getting into a relationship with them now.”

Maggie, Dori, Barbara, Arlene, and Collette also believed the Old Testament course gave them opportunities to draw much closer to their parents.

This class has made a difference with me and my dad. We will sit down and talk about the homily at church and stuff like that. We never used to do that. . . . He finds it interesting for me to point out, I learned this or that in class today.
(Maggie)

So, studying the Bible has actually brought me closer to them [parents]. When I talk to them now, I just want to talk to them for hours. I'm not like, yeah, Mom, okay, yeah, this and that. It's like the class has made me view, you know, she can be here today, gone tomorrow, so why take the risk. . . . it's more opened my eyes not to take my family for granted 'cause there's been situations when I was at home and did not want to be and now being so far away, it's kinda like, I wish I was with them now. (Dori)

Barbara and Arlene acknowledged having a rebellious stage before starting college this year. They now understand and related to their parents much better than they did just a few months ago.

Well, I think that because it has had such a tremendous affect on my attitude and just my outlook on life, because I've not had the best relationship with my family. We're all Christians, but I had like a stupid period earlier during my junior and senior year of high school. I mean I didn't do anything tragic or anything. I didn't drink or do drugs or whatever, but my mind was out of it. I wasn't thinking in a godly manner, and I didn't care. . . . It's helped me to relate to my family better and it's really helped me with my mom's relationship because she's really excited about all of the things I am learning and this class has really helped me mature. Not just as a Christian, but as a woman as well. (Barbara)

Yeah, I mean, learning in the Bible class, it's gotten me to where I'm closer to my family, just because I can. I'm not in that rebellious stage anymore. I'm not where I was, you know, fight with them for everything like how I was before. Now, I just feel like I'm growing closer to God and that is helping me grow closer to my family and just understand everything, especially my parents, and understand why they make the decisions they do. (Arlene)

Collette mentioned that her dad studied the Bible a great deal. She had become more comfortable about engaging in conversations with him about something in the Bible. She stated, "I may not be on the same level, but I am able to at least connect with him."

Linda talked about how God revealed a friendship had become an idol in her life and realized she needed to make a change.

I had made a friend an idol. It was just a very dependent friendship and it wasn't healthy. In the beginning, it started off to be like a life-giving friendship and it was centered around the Lord but then it started being more focused on each other. . . . This class has spoken a lot to me on how I had turned away from God. God's been growing me a lot further. . . . it's been a struggle of like what to do about it; but now I've been letting go and giving distance to restore our hearts completely back to God. (Linda)

Other participants believed studying the Old Testament made a positive difference in the relationships they had with friends or just people in general.

I've noticed that I'm more into not how I feel myself, but I find myself, not mentoring, but listening to friends and trying to help them through their struggles and that kind of connection, just being there for them more and setting other stuff aside. . . . I've definitely grown closer to friends and others through this Bible study; and well, just conversation with some of my friends who also have shared faith with me and we kind of help each other along just to be there for each other through the struggles and lack of sleep and the highs and lows of college life. (Irene)

It's helped my relationship with just people in general; if I want to talk about the Old Testament now I feel like I can with different people. And, it's helped my relationship with people in class because we've had study groups and some of my friends, we had a late, late night study, which was actually a lot of fun, the night before our last test. That was just great because we got together and we learned about the Bible in the middle of Steak 'n Shake and that's cool. (Collette)

Barbara's new passion for loving others was "definitely boosted" because of learning God's word. She remarked, "And loving others is kind of my motive for doing whatever I do."

Domain 3: The Christian-Focused Learning Environment

Students greatly appreciated the overall Christian environment at MBU. Five major themes came together to create this domain: (a) Integration of Faith and Learning, (b) Teachers, (c) Prayer in the Classroom, (d) Old Testament as Required Curriculum, and (e) Learning From Different Perspectives.

Integration of Faith and Learning

MBU (2010) intentionally integrates faith and learning with the purpose of ascertaining and developing "integral relationships between the Christian faith and human knowledge (in various disciplines), motivations, and behaviors" (p. 10). The

integration of faith and learning prepares students to “demonstrate the use of critical tools to evaluate the relationship between faith and other disciplines. . . . [and] the ability to explore and apply ethics and value systems in moral decision-making” (p.10). While admission to the University is open to students of all faiths, the faculty and staff at MBU provide written statements of their Christian faith. This requirement supports and nurtures a learning environment from a biblically based Christian perspective. All 13 students recognized great value in the university’s commitment to integrating faith with their learning.

Faith and learning has truly helped me. The timing of having students study it [Old Testament] in their first semester, I think, is a really good idea. For people like me, who it was a complete change, I just know God’s timing was in this, definitely, in putting me in this class at this point of time in my life because it pushed me to not fall back as much as I would have had I not been studying God’s word. (Felicia)

For Dori, her experiences while taking the Old Testament History course during her first semester as a freshman confirmed in her heart she had made the right choice in coming to MBU. Dori believed studying the Bible helped her to know how to integrate her faith with what she was learning in psychology, so she could “understand people better and be more effective in helping them.” Arlene stated more than once how she appreciated the “whole Christian environment.”

Hailey chose to attend MBU because of its integration of faith and learning and had this to say:

I wanted to have Bible classes, just to further my knowledge of God’s Word. . . . The types of things he [teacher] taught me made me want to learn more. Ever since I’ve been going to the class, I’ve wanted to get deeper knowledge of the Bible and deeper knowledge of God. (Hailey)

Five of the students described the Old Testament course as “planting seeds” for non-believers. They believed it was an effective way to initially integrate faith and learning for students who had never read the Bible or did not consider themselves a Christian. For instance, Linda was so thankful for the Christian environment and the required class. She stated, “I think it is awesome and I’m really thankful for the class because I think God . . . can use it to speak to people who are lost. The course plants seeds.” Arlene agreed the Old Testament History course “plants the seed” for students who have not made a commitment to God. Although she grew up with the Bible, Collette acknowledged she was amazed at how much she learned from the course. She reflected for a few moments on her interactions with some classmates during the course, classmates who claimed to be Christians. It became clear to her they did not like the course. She had this to say:

I know that has to do with the attitude they have and probably the fact that they’re feeling convicted by God’s word! I believe that will be a seed planted because they can’t hide from God’s presence. His word tells us that. I know it’s blessed my life and I think it’s going to bless even the people who don’t want to be there. (Collette)

Early in the course, Elaine realized some of the students in the Old Testament class were more interested in playing sports than taking the Bible seriously. At first, this disappointed Elaine, but then she remembered saying to herself, “Wait a minute; it’s a big witnessing zone here. Maybe we planted a seed through this class!” Maggie also remarked about how some of the students did “not take it seriously.” Maggie believed had the class size been smaller “we could get even more accomplished and be able to touch a lot more people.” Felicia summed it up this way:

It's [the Old Testament class] an awesome way to reach out to people—non-believers that have to take this class. I think it will touch a lot of people and even if they've never thought about God before, it will open their eyes and will hear about it, whether they want to or not. Having to take OT plants the seed." (Felicia)

Teachers

Eight of the students identified the faculty as an important component to integrating their faith with their learning. They particularly appreciated the way Dr. Chambers and faculty from their other classes shared their faith in and out of the classroom. Linda reflected on how all of her teachers during the semester had become a real inspiration to her. Irene remarked about how genuine the teachers were with their faith and how they not only cared about what she was learning but also cared about her personally. Others shared her sentiments as well.

Most of the professors are very out there with their faith. They don't hide it; they don't conceal it. . . . I really like how they incorporate the Bible into their teaching here. . . . I came from the most secular high school out there and it's really encouraging to see adult figures in the classroom setting living for Christ. (Hailey)

Gail and Irene also noted they had attended a public high school. Gale expressed great appreciation for the Christian environment and the way faith was integrated into the classroom. She stated, "It's hard to be just yourself, but here [MBU] it's just easier to be yourself." Irene noted her experiences in the Old Testament course greatly influenced her development as a Christian, through its content and the leadership of Dr. Chambers. She expressed appreciation for all of her teachers at MBU because "they care about you. I know they care about the individuals—not just about their grades but about what they are going through." Barbara also stated the teachers and Christian environment at MBU had more of a positive influence on her than she expected, partly because she recognized

genuineness in the teachers' faith and commitment to the students, which she greatly appreciated.

I'm learning to do everything to the glory of God. . . . The teachers have their own personal walk with the Lord. They're not just here to teach; they're here to do that integration of faith and learning. They are not doing it because they have to; they're doing it because they care. I'm also very impressed with President Lacey and Dr. Chambers because they share their faith and are good role models. (Barbara)

When the university recruited Dori to play a sport, she learned of the faith and integration focus at the school. She was a bit "iffy" at first about attending. Just prior to starting the course, Dori wondered if "they would more like preach it" but she quickly found it was "not that at all."

Collette and Elaine also remarked they had attended public high schools. They reflected on how coming to MBU wonderfully surpassed their expectations of attending a Christian university. They both intentionally chose to attend MBU, but were unsure of what to expect.

I really didn't hold my hopes really, really high for thinking that I would be very, very happy with the teachers here as far as their Christian influence. I didn't do that because I didn't want to get disappointed. But, I haven't been disappointed. I have high standards now! (Elaine)

It has actually exceeded what I thought! Chapel, prayer in class, and teachers talk about God and make it personal; they make it obvious that they serve God. . . . It's the coolest thing to say it from a Christian perspective. (Collette)

Prayer in the Classroom

Seven of the students remarked about how much they appreciated and looked forward to attending classes because the teachers would pray in class. Jackie was impressed with the approach teachers took by setting a good example with prayer. Jackie

stated, “Teachers pray at the beginning of class—that makes me so happy!” Hailey somewhat expected prayer would be integrated into Bible courses, but she was pleasantly pleased to find “a lot of the professors pray before class even in non-Bible classes.” Because Irene came from a public high school, praying in class was a “brand new thing” for her and spoke confidently about how it strengthened her faith because of the way “teachers pray before class.”

Allowing prayer in classrooms went pleasantly beyond Collette, Gail, Dori, and Barbara’s expectations as well. Barbara specifically mentioned how teachers prayed and integrated numerous connections to God in her psychology and English classes. Gail stated, “I just expected us to just like have chapel and that would be our only connection to worship and prayer.” Dori greatly appreciated the freedom that teachers and students have to pray in class, especially “before tests.”

Old Testament as Required Curriculum

Requiring all undergraduate students to take Old Testament History and New Testament History is but one way MBU integrates faith and learning for the students. All 13 of the students greatly valued their experiences in the Old Testament course and the overall Christian environment. All but 2 participants believed the Old Testament course should be a required course at the undergraduate level. Barbara and Maggie, while they personally had some life-changing experiences because of taking the Old Testament course, they did not believe it should be required. These two discrepant ideas about not having Old Testament History as a required course did not diminish the value Barbara

and Maggie placed on the course and how studying the Bible in an academic setting positively affected their lives.

Barbara reflected on how mad she felt when admissions initially told her the course was required before she could graduate. She actually did not have a problem with taking the course, but she believed it should have been her choice. While contemplating her initial feelings as compared to her current emotions, Barbara smiled with what appeared to be great contentment on her face and stated, “Seriously, this class has been the purpose of my maturation and my walk with God during the semester.” The joy seemed to bubble up from her soul and Barbara began to share the words from a song she wrote the week before this interview, a song “inspired by the things I have learned in this class.”

Maggie found herself greatly inspired by the course as well. She stated, “It’s really challenging and it’s definitely an inspiring class.” Maggie talked about her excitement during the semester as she found herself constantly making connections between her new knowledge of the Old Testament and other courses she was taking as well as her job in retail. She recalled some recent discussions in her health class about sex, drugs, and alcohol as well as remembering an incident of theft where she worked. While making such connections, Maggie found herself contemplating not only God’s will for her life but also thinking about what God really “had in mind” for his people.

As the end of the semester was drawing close, the interviews gave students time to reflect on the value of taking the Old Testament course and its role in introducing them to the concept of integration of faith and learning. Elaine, Collette, and Arlene, as noted

previously in the results, made specific connections between the story of creation and their newly found appreciation and love for life and everything God had made. Hailey was grateful the Old Testament course was required. She found herself integrating biblical principles and scriptures into written assignments for other classes, thinking a great deal about the many insights she gained about marriage and parenting from the scriptures and the real-life applications Dr. Chambers shared in class. She concluded with one wish.

I personally wish there were more Bible classes required. I understand why there are not, but for me, I want to be able to do whatever my major is and still get the benefits of going to a Christian university. (Hailey)

During the semester, Felicia gained great insight into her life and began to understand why MBU required students to take the Old Testament History course.

The Old Testament is so relevant to today. . . . It's an every day battle—the whole cycle we learned about where God's people, they were obeying Him and then they get off track and start to ignore Him, and then the consequences occur. Then they fight with him and then come back to realize what they did was wrong and need to get back in their walk with God. It's just like an everyday occurrence in life today. (Felicia)

Until this course, the story of King David was the only story Karen believed she could pull from memory. Karen mentioned she had not grown up in a Christian home but remembered at times trying to pull bits and pieces out of the Bible on her own, “trying to fit it into the way I think,” she stated. When Karen found out the Bible classes were required, she remembered feeling happy. She only wished every college required Bible courses. She stated, “It will benefit everyone if you will open your heart to it.”

The requirement to take the Old Testament course pleased Barbara and Dori because it helped them to connect psychology with biblical characters and principles.

Arlene, Collette, Irene, and Elaine thoroughly enjoyed learning the timeline of Bible events and their connections to real-life history. Elaine's love for history became evident during the interview. Elaine remarked on how she wished more institutions required such a course, "because it is history; it's no different than reading about ancient civilizations, to a non Christian, unless they feel insulted by it because it is true." Linda summed it up by saying, "I love that the Old Testament and New Testament are required. It's been awesome!" Arlene believed her life would never be the same because of her experiences in the Old Testament History course.

Being forced to be in the Bible has changed a lot of things. It's changed my life, my path, because I went on the wild side a little bit during senior high. There was a lot going on in my life that kind of provoked it and I was kind of figuring that college would be the same way. (Arlene)

From Dori's perspective, having to take Old Testament History as a required course was "amazing" and provided her exactly what she needed for her first time away from home. During the semester, Dori discovered the Bible had great suspense. She remarked about how she anxiously turned the pages to read about "what's gone to happen next. . . . Studying the Bible the way we have, it's helped me learn and develop."

Finally, Elaine and Irene identified "accountability" as another real value of being required to take the Old Testament History course, not just being accountable to the teacher to earn a grade, but to each other. Elaine stated, "I have met friends here who have been trying to hold me accountable, and I them, as Christians to read our Bible and do homework." She was grateful for the accountability, especially when friends asked, "Have you fellowshiped at all today? Have you read?" During her interview, Irene realized she was also grateful to classmates for holding her accountable. A simple, "Are

you reading your Bible” got her back on track more than once during the semester when she started wavering in her commitment to daily reading and studying the Bible.

Learning From Different Perspectives

Students believed hearing different perspectives from other classmates and the teacher added tremendous value to their lives and enhanced their learning. Elaine stated, “Getting different perspectives is really important to define who you are as a Christian and what you believe.” Elaine especially liked it when students asked questions in class. She enjoyed sitting back, listening, and learning from the students’ and teacher’s responses to the questions. “These people ask intellectual questions; they are serious about it.” Collette, Barbara, Dori, and Irene also shared their thoughts.

I like it when Dr. Chambers gives his opinions sometimes because it helps you form your own. It has helped me learn a lot and mature a lot, and with interpreting the Bible. (Collette)

Another advantage of this class is having the different perspectives from classmates, but also learning about how God has worked through them this semester. To know that we’re not the only ones struggling with particular issues or things. That’s very important at this age. (Barbara)

It’s opened my eyes a lot more. I’ve been in situations to help out people at school and what Dr. Chambers has been teaching us really helped me. It’s changed my perspective as well and brought me closer to God. It’s been really amazing and I like it a lot. It’s been more than I expected. (Dori)

It’s been eye opening because looking at different things I like to see how other people think. They will have come from a different background than me and I’ve been able to see theirs [perspective] and I’ve been able to cement what I actually believe. (Irene)

Agreeing with Dori and Irene, Jackie and Felicia also remarked about how their experiences in the Bible class and the differing perspectives opened their eyes. Jackie stated, “Just being able to speak about God in the class and not being instantly shushed

was liberating. . . . It definitely opens your eyes to the way different people see different things.” Felicia remarked, “This class made me open my eyes and I saw that I was ignoring God and at a time I needed him most to be strong and influence other people.”

Domain 4: Transitioning into College Away From Home

Ten of the 13 participants took the Old Testament course during their first semester as a freshman. Although the remaining 3 students were first-semester sophomores, it was the first semester on a Christian campus for one of the three. For many college students, the freshman experience represents a challenging transition from high school as they acclimate to campus life, often with it being their first time away from home. This domain shares the participants’ stories about how the Bible course helped them make the transition from high school into college and the personal strength they gained to deal with life as a college student far away from home and family.

The Bible course has been a positive thing for my life. I’ve never left home or done anything outside my comfort zone and so, when I came to college, a lot of it was really overwhelming for me. . . . I really wasn’t growing as a Christian at all. I was trying to get used to my surroundings, so it kind of made me sit back a bit; but then Dr. Chambers is really a good professor and each day I would come to class he would always give me some encouraging words that I needed to hear. Then the big projects that we had to do after each of our readings forced me to be in the Word even if I thought I was too busy that day or whatever. So, it’s really helped me in my transition because I was kind of a baby about going to school and it was hard for me to adjust for a while. (Felicia)

Linda found herself getting excited at the end of every class period of the Old Testament because of “the way God used it that day to speak to exactly what” she was going through at the time. As Linda remarked, “This being my first semester in college, I’ve been going through some stuff and God’s just been using it a lot in my life.” She reflected on how difficult it had been for her being away from home, family, and friends.

Linda stated, “By getting into the scriptures here I have learned to lean on the Lord more.” Collette had similar experiences throughout the course as she often related something she learned in class to what was going on in her life at the time. She stated, “I found it happened quite often. . . . in what Dr. Chambers would say or what he would talk about; it’s just been very relevant to my life right now.”

It was also the first time away from home for Elaine and Dori. Elaine knew it was going to be a big step away from her high school life and as she thought about preparing to complete her first semester of college, she stated, “I believe I have matured in many ways. This class has really encouraged me to mature and to delve a little deeper and I now study my Bible regularly.” Dori was confident the Old Testament class eased her transition into college, especially knowing she was thousands of miles away from home. Dori remembered something she held onto the entire semester. She stated, “It’s what Dr. Chambers says in class, just to let God do the work in your life; that’s helped me a lot. That’s what stood out to me.” Dori had become more comfortable as a college student. During the interview, she uttered her newly adopted daily prayer reminder, “God, have me and do your work.”

The transition from high school to college initially presented Karen with a sense of being lost in her life. She and her friends back home were “frustrated” as new college students because they felt in limbo. Her current home church had nothing structured to serve the needs of college-age students and Karen did not know what awaited her at the university. She remembered hearing about some of the “baby Bible” growing up and referred to them as having only “bits and pieces” of the Bible. Her memory of the Old

Testament, other than David, was “just a bunch of people having children.” Karen believed the Old Testament course helped ease her transition into college. Early on in the term, Karen realized she “started getting excited in the class” because she was learning about real events in the Bible, events for which she could see the whole picture and understood their purpose. Having gone through the family tragedy early in the semester and being away from her friends, Karen stated, “This is just what I needed at this time in my life.”

Hailey faced challenges growing up because of family moves. She struggled with loneliness, but as she studied the Bible during the semester, she sensed God’s companionship stronger than ever before.

I’ve moved around my whole life, but coming to college here, it was like starting all over again trying to make friends. . . . I’ve always had my family, but they’re not here anymore. . . . I struggled a little bit with loneliness at first. But just this semester and through studying the Bible he’s [God] given me opportunities to grow closer to him and to lean on him and trust him; and I’m just going to keep having that mind set for now on instead of, poor me, I’m all alone in this world. (Hailey)

Irene’s first semester as a freshman started off in crisis. Her father lost his job not long before classes were to begin. She stated, “That rocked our whole family, because it was a complete surprise.” The study of the Psalms gave Irene great personal strength to handle the family crisis and the stressors or daily pressures of dealing with her new college life. Irene gained much personal strength studying the Old Testament because she recognized God was taking care of her. She stated, “I know I am supposed to be here [MBU]. . . . and even if I don’t see him, it’s really comforting to know that I don’t have to rely on myself.” After studying Psalms 131: 1-3 (NIV), which was required reading for

the course, Irene put the following scripture on her dorm room wall as a daily reminder and source of strength.

O Lord, my heart is not proud, nor my eyes haughty; nor do I involve myself in great matters, or in things too difficult for me. Surely, I have composed and quieted my soul; like a weaned child rests against his mother, my soul is like a weaned child within me. Oh, Israel, hope in the Lord from this time forth and forever. (Irene)

Jackie faced a potential crisis during her time in the Old Testament course but found comfort and support from the scriptures as well as from Dr. Chambers and his assistant, Ms. Tudor.

Studying the Bible and scriptures like the one that says if you humble yourself and seek my face and turn from your wicked ways then I will heal you, forgive you, helped me this semester. . . . Also, Dr. Chambers is an awesome and godly man. I also found out earlier this semester that I had to have a biopsy. I found out that it was benign but for about 2 1/2 weeks, I was going nuts because my father had cancer and we were having the same problems. I was able to go up to Dr. Chambers and talk to him about everything. You know, that's one thing I love about this university. I know all of my professors by name. I have their phone numbers; I can talk to them about whatever, whenever, and they're genuine! They're not just people who are there for you on the surface; they are totally there for you. I brag about that and about the school. . . . This helped me get through this semester here. (Jackie)

Although Dori did not experience any true crises during her first semester in college, being so far away from home, she found great comfort in the Old Testament scriptures because of how God was always there for his people. She referred to what she had read in the Old Testament about all of the wars and the great flood, and she stated, "History replays itself . . . and we're going through the same struggles." She spoke confidently about how God would take care of her, even if something should happen to her while away at school, just as he did for Daniel and others in the Bible.

Gail viewed her transition from a public high school into a Christian college as “an enjoyable experience.” She talked about how the in-depth studies of the Old Testament showed her “God keeps his promises and so I know that if God makes a promise to me that He is going to keep it.”

Four of the students specifically mentioned how the weekly chapel services with its music and worship helped their transition away from home because it filled a void left from being away from their home church. Dori captured everyone’s sentiments when she stated, “And chapel, oh, chapel’s amazing. Chapel is something I love going to. I look forward to it every Thursday.”

Domain 5: The Future

This domain emerged as the participants were asked to talk about how their experiences in the Old Testament course influenced their thoughts about the future. Some of the students sensed a new call on their lives or confirmation for their current path, while others found inspiration and direction for their future roles as wives or parents.

I truly believe psychology is my future. . . .This class has opened my eyes and I think my future is going to hold a lot more than I thought it would or thought it could be. . . . I’ve learned to love myself. . . .Studying the Bible the way we have, it’s helped me learn and develop. . . . Now, when I have family of my own, I’m going to plug the Bible into my kids right away. . . . bring God in their lives right away. Tell them he’s real. (Dori)

Jackie stated, “Dr. Chambers opened my eyes” to a future that includes God in all things. “My future— I guess relies on just living with God and in God in ways that I didn't really perceive before this class.” As for Hailey, she believed studying the Old Testament marked the beginning of many life-changing experiences in store for her, not only at the university but also long into her future. Hailey stated, “It’s helped me gain

more of an understanding of who God is and what he wants for me. It's made me seriously consider changing my major. . . . So, it's changed my life!" Irene had never been one to think heavily about her future. She talked about how it bothered some of her friends because they could not understand the peace she had about the future. The Old Testament course deepened her love for history and cemented her path toward earning a degree in history. As a witness to her faith and belief God would lead and direct her future, Hailey mentioned her studies of the Old Testament encouraged her to tell her friends, "I know that God is there and his hand is in everything."

Felicia started the semester with little direction as to what she wanted to do in the future. She stated, "Dr. Chambers has influenced me, and although I still don't have any idea yet, I am ready to see what God wants me to do long term." For the present time, Felicia believed God brought her to MBU to serve as a strong Christian role model for her athletic team, knowing how she chooses to conduct herself over the next 3 ½ years will have lasting effects on her future. Linda believed "a lot has just been pouring into" her during the Old Testament course as well as being on a Christian campus. For Linda, the timing of this course provided additional confirmation she was supposed to become a leader for *Young Life*, an organization dedicated to working with adolescents and leading them to the Lord. She believed the course prepared her to be a more effective leader because it helped to drive biblical "truth deeper" into her heart.

Because Dr. Chambers talked a great deal about marriage throughout the term, Hailey thought about her future as a wife and remarked, "I will work that into my marriage in the future. . . . I can see it having an effect on the rest of my life." Dr.

Chambers also inspired Elaine's outlook for her future career and married life. She reflected on how Dr. Chambers talked about his wife, and recognized she too wanted "to be a godly wife" in the future. Elaine also realized by taking the course it led her to thinking about "having a career in maybe teaching something like this" as a way of combining her love for history along with the Bible.

Collette also started thinking about teaching for the first time. The lessons Collette learned in the Old Testament went hand-in-hand with a booklet she had been studying at her church "about how to use your spiritual gifts to minister in the kingdom of God." She believed God opened an additional opportunity for her during the semester to connect with a Bosnian child who needed a tutor. She saw God's hand in bringing all three events together, the Old Testament course, the spiritual gifts booklet, and tutoring a little boy, as a way of directing her to the field of education and working with children who have special needs. Gail began to see special needs children in her future as well. Gail admitted she had not been one to study the Bible much at all before starting the Old Testament course. She had not thought much about her future beyond just making it through school and earning a degree as an elementary teacher. During the term, she sensed a call from God on her life to work at a Christian residential children's home and use her teaching skills there. This connected with her deepened awareness of meaning and purpose in her life, as she stated, "Learning about how God called Israel, it showed me that God has a call on his people and so I know that God has a call for me."

Arlene started the term knowing she was going to teach biology in the future, believing it would be in at a large public school system. The in-depth study of the

creation and her heightened awareness of the realness of God, Arlene plans to seek employment in a Christian school setting instead of a public one, so she will be able to take a stand on creation versus evolution. Studying the Old Testament also led Karen to change direction for her future. During the semester, she switched from majoring in Psychology to majoring in a religious-oriented program, so she could take all of the Bible classes.

Maggie believed as long as she remembered to “keep God number one” in her life, she would have more peace about whatever her future may hold. Prior to taking the Old Testament course, Maggie worried about her future constantly. When she started the year as a first-time freshman, she was under a lot of self-inflicted pressure to pick the right major that would lead to the right job. During her studies, Maggie realized she no longer had to have her entire future planned, believing if she continued “writing and connecting the dots,” God would reveal his plan for her future. She began thinking more about “how life would be okay instead of just stressing out about it.” Before taking the Old Testament course, Maggie never thought about dedicating her life to God. Everything she read for class helped to confirm her beliefs and she started sensing a new call to dedicate her life and future to the service of God in some way.

Before taking the Old Testament course, Barbara also focused heavily on choosing the correct major and worried about how much money she would make after graduation. By the end of the course, Barbara’s outlook changed.

I really don’t think I can choose the wrong career now because if God places the desire in my heart and I pursue it, I don’t need to worry about how much it’s going to pay. The amount of money I make isn’t going to matter. . . . Where I’m going to live isn’t going to matter. It’s the people I impact. (Barbara)

Teacher Interview Results

Interviewing the teacher, Dr. Chambers, and his classroom manager, Ms. Tudor, provided additional data and an opportunity for triangulation to validate the students' results. Two broad questions guided the interview (see Appendix J). The first question assisted in ascertaining the goals or learning objectives the teacher had for the course. The second question gave the teacher and his assistant an opportunity to reflect on personal observations about how students responded to the class as a whole and identify some specific activities, assignments, or classroom experiences they perceived as having influenced the students' lives, spiritually or otherwise. At times throughout the interview, Dr. Chambers and Ms. Tudor referred to their interactions with individual students as a way to provide examples of how they observed changes in the students' lives over the semester. At no time did they ever use a student's name.

Five domains emerged from the data: (a) Course Goals and Learning Objectives, (b) Requiring Students to Take the Course, (c) Religious Curriculum, (d) Relevance of God's Word: Applying What They Learned, and (e) Observations of Spiritual Growth and Development.

Domain 1: Course Goals and Learning Objectives

The Old Testament syllabus lists the broad established goals and objectives for the Old Testament History course (Appendix K). Dr. Chambers and Ms. Tudor articulated their personal goals and objectives for the course.

I want them to walk away with a basic literacy in biblical concepts and I want them to walk away deeply impacted by the relevance of the Bible for their questions, their hopes, their fears, their hurts, their sin, and their recognition of the

problem. . . . There's four ideas that I teach the whole Bible for, and three of them are Old Testament ideas. The first is that, God is a holy God—He's holy; and the second is, we're not. And, then the third is, the consequent idea is, we need a Savior. And, that sums up the Old Testament. (Chambers)

Dr. Chambers desired his students to have a serious encounter with God through His Word. He expected some students would wrestle with it, knowing they would have more questions by the end of the course than they did at the beginning.

Finally, Dr. Chambers wanted his students to realize how relevant the Word of God was to their every day lives. He concluded with these final remarks about his personal goals and his desire to see how studying the Old Testament effected change in the lives of his students.

I want them to know the will of God for their lives, for the good life God wants for them. I also want them to know the power of the love of God, the mercy of God, to effect change in them, and that they can only come through experiencing His grace and forgiveness into that power that enables them naturally to begin to follow His way for them. (Chambers)

Ms. Tudor served as Dr. Chambers' permanent classroom manager, or teaching assistant, and has so for five years. She was responsible for attendance, grading all work, holding study sessions before exams, and giving overall support to the students. Ms. Tudor reported between 50% and 66% of the students participated in her study sessions before each exam. She described a game of baseball she played with the students during each study session, where there were teams and sets of questions organized by their difficulty, and when answered correctly resulted in points for a single, double, homerun, and so on. Ms. Tudor mentioned the average test scores for students who participated in the study sessions were higher than the rest of the class. Ms. Tudor shared her thoughts about her purpose and personal goals for the class.

My goals are along the same line but a little different, in that I want to help show the students, grace through their assignments because I'm mostly with the students when they do their homework, their attendance, and helping them figure out what the assignment is. . . . But then I also get the chance to show grace through students who are struggling in class—just helping them go back, and say to them, 'you know you may not deserve to get a second chance to do this, but I don't deserve a second chance, but God has given me one, so let me give you one.' (Tudor)

Ms. Tudor did not want the students to feel like it was being “rammed down their throats.” She wanted them to feel free to exercise their rights by saying they completely disagreed with something or by stating what they believed. Her objective was to have the students thinking critically about what they were reading and learning and have confidence their grades would be based on their honesty and critical thought, not on simply repeating back what they heard.

Domain 2: Requiring Students to Take the Course

Dr. Chambers was confident the Old Testament course had a vital role in educating students, and he believed the university should continue requiring it for all undergraduate students. He also commented about how God used “this ancient book to bring healing to their hurts, their wounds and bring vision and clarity to their ambition.” The Old and New Testament History courses, along with required chapel attendance, help define the university as an evangelical institution and support its mission. Dr. Chambers and Ms. Tudor had this to say about why they believed it was important to require Bible courses for all undergraduate students.

It is because the knowledge of God is the most important knowledge in all of existence! If they don't know and they're not connected to the source of all wisdom, then they just have facts and data, and they have to put it together the best they can. But, it's not going to be rooted in a transcendent reality that is above cultures and people groups, and countries, and generations. We have to

have permanent wisdom—transcendent wisdom. . . . You need to read the Old Testament so that you will be led to see your need for Christ and then you can be put right with God by faith and not by works of the law. (Chambers)

Ms. Tudor agreed with Dr. Chambers and added, “All truth is God’s truth and if you don’t know where the truth comes from, what’s the point of knowing it.”

Domain 3: Religious Curriculum

Among the many biblical topics covered in the curriculum, Dr. Chambers and Ms. Tudor identified only few pivotal items they covered throughout the semester, which included creation versus evolution, the 10 Commandments, God the Father and Parenting.

Creation-Evolution

Knowing the majority of students came from public high schools, Dr. Chambers addressed the creation-evolution debate early in the semester because “they’ve had good teachers, even religious teachers, but are constrained to teach only one approach to origins.” Dr. Chambers approached this topic carefully, wanting to give the students some options to consider. He never wanted his students to “feel like some Bible-thumping fundamentalist preacher [was] coming in there just to smack down their public education.” He wanted his students to “search with integrity” by presenting evolution from the naturalist and theistic perspectives as well as intelligent design and finally creation. He stated many of the students came in “steeped in one way of thinking that they need some room; they need to hear other ideas, but they need some room to wrestle.”

Although Dr. Chambers gave his opinion in support of a 6-day creation, he always encouraged students to engage in critically thinking. From his perspective, having the students read the entire book of Genesis was incredibly important, not only because he addressed the creation-evolution debate, but also to help them understand the first 11 chapters of Genesis sets the stage for the rest of the Bible. He stated, “Genesis is history, but it has primarily a theological purpose, which leads to a spiritual application.” As recorded in the early chapters of Genesis, the culture surrounding Moses and the Hebrews was relativistic and polytheistic. Dr. Chambers remarked that Genesis 1-11 was a “polemic” against such a mindset and served as “a theological shot across the bow to self-righteous attitudes that say that I can please God in my own strength.”

The 10 Commandments

In keeping true to his own personal objectives for the course and the mission of the university, Dr. Chambers wanted the students to know and reflect on the 10 Commandments and the functions of the law in the Old Testament. He started the class with the assumption that although many of the students may not have known or be able to recite the all of the Commandments, he believed their principles or ideas rang in their hearts. He prayed students would realize during the semester how the Old Testament law was more than just the 10 Commandments and the Books of Moses; they were the “entire old covenant. . . . and these moral requirements must be kept internally before they [would] have any meaning externally.” Dr. Chambers made two specific points to the students about adhering to the Commandments. He told them it was “God’s will that they follow these principles because it [was] for their own good and because God [was] a

good God and wanted good things for his people.” His goal was to encourage the students to think about where their levels of moral awareness and moral formation were before and after they completed the Old Testament course. Dr. Chambers drew from personal experiences and gave an example of a message he conveyed to the students about the fifth Commandment, “Honor your father and mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you” (Ex. 20:12).

I know for a fact, because I was kind of a smartelick when I was that age too; there’s not a student in this class who hasn’t figured out their mom and dad are not perfect. And, there are some who have been hurt by their parents, deeply, and they don’t know how to honor them. We talk about the promise is to you—that you may live long in the land. And, so I try to teach them, you just don’t honor your parents because you are supposed to, you honor them because it pleases God. And, when you learn to respect authority, whether they have earned it or not, you are enabled; you are disciplined in your own internal spirit to live a longer successful and more prosperous life. (Chambers)

God the Father and Parenting

Throughout the term, Dr. Chambers made many connections between God as a loving parent and learning how to be a good parent. He often used stories from his own life as a parent to make a point in class by personalizing Deuteronomy 8:5, which states, “. . . the Lord your God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his son.” Dr. Chambers told the students, “to learn to be a good parent, you have to learn how to be a good child of God.”

Domain 4: Relevance of God’s Word: Applying What They Learned

Everyone’s Need of a Savior

Dr. Chambers taught along a historical timeline and the students learned how the events of the Bible connected, leading up to the New Testament and the birth of Christ as

Savior. He believed it helped the students see the bigger and more meaningful lessons and truths from the Holy Scriptures more clearly, especially those who grew up with the Bible and entered the class believing they already knew everything. Dr. Chambers remarked about how students' assessment of many scriptures was "almost universally out of context." He worked all semester to encourage the students to apply what they were learning to their own lives. For example, to help personalize the following three main ideas or themes he used to summarize the primary purpose of the Old Testament: (a) God is Holy; (b) we are not; (c) we need a Savior, Dr. Chambers used a passage of scripture in Joshua 24:14. In this passage of scripture, Joshua had renewed the covenant with God at Shechem and said to the Israelites, "choose you for yourselves today whom you will serve." Dr. Chambers used this scripture to stress an important biblical truth by telling them, "Joshua then dumps a bucket of ice water on the Israelites' heads by telling them they were unable." In other words, Dr. Chambers wanted the students to realize all humans' sin. He stated to them, "it is only the kindness, mercy, and grace of God that can actually govern their hearts, because it is only the love of God that can break the chains of sin." He emphasized the Old Testament leads to the New Testament and the birth of Christ, God's Son, the Savior.

God's Faithfulness and Forgiveness

Dr. Chambers wanted God's faithfulness and his forgiveness to reverberate in the hearts and minds of his students. He cited his lecture on Jeremiah, and especially Jeremiah 31:3, where it says, "I have drawn you with loving kindness," as having made a "huge" contribution to the message of the Old Testament. Throughout the semester, the

students learned about how God remained faithful to an unfaithful people—the cycle of following God, turning away from him, and repenting—only to repeat the cyclical pattern.

Dr. Chambers vividly remembered the day in class when he talked about Jeremiah, stressing again the inability of humans to keep the law. As he had impressed upon them often throughout the semester, he reminded the students that day about their need for a Savior—the one who was capable of keeping the covenant of the law for them. He believed by the time they studied Jeremiah, the concept of God being ever faithful and just in his punishment of the unfaithful, had become more cemented in the hearts of many students. He commented about how they realized “this is about me.” He described his memory of that day.

I don't know how to describe it except for just a feeling, but it was a weight of grace and judgment. I felt it in my heart. . . . and on that day, I saw tears on several faces. . . . It was finally the first time, instead of a 25-minute sermon [in church] that ends with a quick invitation, they had heard several months of a story of a faithful God and an unfaithful people. (Chambers)

Dr. Chambers also recalled a classroom discussion on Joel, which took place just one-week prior to his interview for this project. He shared scripture from Joel 2:13, which proclaims a message from God and states, “Return to Me with all your heart and with fasting, weeping, and mourning; and rend your heart, and not your garments.” He asked the general question to students, “What do you see; what is he saying?” Dr. Chambers shared a female student's response as, “I see it was in Isaiah's message; I see that God will not approve of outward religion that is not real, that's not in the heart, from the heart.” Dr. Chambers realized she and most likely other students were beginning to

understand “that being outwardly religious is not necessary; it isn’t anything to God. He looks for true repentance and true faith.”

Domain 5: Observations of Spiritual Growth and Development

Dr. Chambers and Ms. Tudor observed spiritual growth in the students throughout the semester, both in and out of the classroom. They both had personal interactions with students. On many occasions, Ms. Tudor read in students’ homework and tests about the numerous ways studying the Old Testament in an academic setting affected their lives.

One-on-One Interactions with Students

During the interview, Dr. Chambers and Ms. Tudor remembered a few one-on-one encounters they personally had with students during the semester. Dr. Chambers mentioned once he dismissed class each day he rarely walked back to his office alone. The week prior to this interview, one of his female students approached Dr. Chambers and said, “Thank you for asking me to read the Bible for myself. My priest taught me a lot of good things about Christ, but I never knew how to find it in the Bible.” Nearly everyday after class, some students accompanied Dr. Chambers back to his office, asking questions, sharing their thoughts and experiences, or wanting prayer. Dr. Chambers mentioned it was most often the students who had become “spiritually engaged” in what they were learning, although sometimes it might have been students struggling with something in their personal lives.

Ms. Tudor recalled a personal struggle of one particular female student. The student had a tragic loss of a loved one early in the term and reached out to Ms. Tudor for support and assistance to make it through the course. Ms. Tudor worked with the student

a great deal; she gave her emotional support and helped her catch up on homework assignments throughout the semester. Ms. Tudor watched her struggle emotionally and academically as the student did all she could do to keep the semester from being a washout. Toward the end of the semester, the student's computer crashed and the lost work cost her 100 points of extra credit she had been working on for days. Ms. Tudor remembered the student's response to another adverse event in her life. Instead of the student getting upset and frustrated, she sought Ms. Tudor out to thank her for all of the help she had given her throughout the semester. This response surprised Ms. Tudor and she remarked, "This is not always the response I get from students—especially when they have external issues that stop them from getting the grade that they want." Ms. Tudor saw a peace and calmness in the student, rare under the circumstances. Having worked with the student nearly all semester, Ms. Tudor observed how she coped with the tragedy in her life along with the challenges of keeping up with her studies. Based on what Ms. Tudor saw and heard from the student she believed "this class had great impact on her."

Dr. Chambers remembered another female student who approached him after class one day. She wanted to tell him about how God's sovereignty had become real to her in class that day and how she realized she could trust God for her life, knowing he would be faithful. Dr. Chambers recalled the student was in tears as she mentioned going through some difficult problems with her family, ones totally out of her control. Dr. Chambers remarked about how he felt after this encounter. He said, "That little lady blessed my heart because I could just feel that a load had been taken off of her." Dr. Chambers also read some written affirmation he had received from a male student

thanking him because he “used this time to reach students both academically and spiritually.”

Observations During Class Time

One of Dr. Chambers’ favorite statements he made to the students was, “You have no idea what God can do through the people in this room.” When he made the statement he wanted the students to recognize they needed “to quite dreaming small dreams” for themselves and be “determined to find out how big God [was] so they might have a vision for their lives appropriate to the greatness of God.” On the day he made this statement, he observed students who were “stirred by that, because they want a purpose in their lives bigger than themselves.” He wanted the students to understand God was greater than they had permitted him to be in their lives, but he also realized some students might have felt a “twinge of guilt for ever putting God in a box.”

Dr. Chambers acknowledged that while it was not his direct responsibility to “solve their spiritual problems,” as that was something between them and God, he believed he was responsible to help them know how to seek God’s help for their lives and discover they did not have to “earn the favor of God.” He was comfortable with “knocking the props out from under them” if it encouraged them to seriously think. Dr. Chambers also acknowledged as students realized they could not earn their salvation, they may have sensed hopelessness or some despair until God could “open their eyes.”

Observations Made Through Assignments

Ms. Tudor remarked about how students were seeing things from the Bible differently than ever before and “applying it more to their lives.” As Ms. Tudor graded

the students' tests and essays during the semester, she started to see a change in their writings. She began to sense their desire to love God and to walk by faith and accept the gift of salvation, not earned by works of the law. She recited some of the statements she remembered reading in their written work, such as, "I've never believed this before, but wow, God opened my eyes." "God is wrathful, but at the same time God is forgiving and if I repent then he will forgive, but salvation is a gift, something you can't earn." She commented further about what she observed in the students' homework and tests.

What they have learned is leading them to despair in their own abilities to make themselves right with God. I have seen several students who have come to the conclusion that they may have at one time thought they could do it themselves but they know now by reading the Bible and through this class that they cannot do it on their own. Some students thought they had been self-sufficient all along, but now they recognize that salvation cannot be earned. . . . as they are writing, they recognize their own sin whereas they may not have before. (Tudor)

In all of her grading and interaction with the students, Ms. Tudor started sensing some of them were on a "spiritual quest" and personalizing what they were learning; it was about the time they started Unit 2 of the course, which began the second month of the semester. Unit 2 covered what Dr. Chambers referred to as "the cycle" where Israel made a bad decision and turned away from God; they paid the consequences; they repented; and then started the cycle again. Throughout this unit, it became clear to Ms. Tudor as to how many students were critically thinking about their answers rather than regurgitate back what they thought would earn points. She remarked about how the students were "personalizing" what they learned, whereas earlier in the term, "you could tell they were very detached from it." Ms. Tudor remembered one essay she graded from a female student in the class. The student wrote she had never encountered the Bible

before this class. She had heard about God and understood she was a sinner, but until this class, she had no idea what they meant. The student concluded her essay with her personal desire to give God glory in her life and become the person God desired.

As the semester continued, Ms. Tudor also realized awareness in students she had not seen before. Students were beginning to make comments such as, “This is not just something someone is telling me; this is something that is real.” Ms. Tudor commented on how the students kept writing about the cycle of Israel throughout the remainder of the term, often admitting, “I do that” as well. The students began to see the same pattern in themselves as the Israelites; meaning they realized they would pull away from God, pay the consequences, and repent, only to do it again.

Ms. Tudor gave another example of how reading and studying the Bible, historically and theologically, affected the students during the semester. She observed students were quite surprised to learn the Bible was not only full of stories about “great people making all these great decisions” but also gave account of many people making bad decisions and choices. She recalled students writing about David and other people in their essays, acknowledging how surprised they were to learn about all of the mistakes they made and how they did not keep the law. For instance, students would most often remark about David who was supposed to be “a man who was after God’s own heart” and yet he failed God on more than one occasion. Many of the students remembered hearing positive stories about David, but not about his failures. Ms. Tudor remembered the type of response she read from several students as they started making personal connections

with what they were learning, which was, “If all of these people can make mistakes and God can forgive them, well maybe he can forgive me too.”

The story of Job also effected a change in thinking for the students. Although the students did not specify their own afflictions in their essays, Ms. Tudor recognized a “searching” in the students writing as they discussed Job, trying to understand and find meaning in why he was afflicted and how it may compare to their own hardships and suffering. Again, Mr. Tudor reported the students’ conclusions resulted in them contemplating God’s faithfulness and forgiveness, and led some of the students to ask themselves the question, “Who am I now?”

The final exam included a take-home essay, which gave students the opportunity to earn extra credit points by answering what Dr. Chambers referred to as the “3-big picture lesson.” The students were instructed to “identify and discuss three big picture lessons you have learned from your study of the Old Testament that you can take with you from this class.” They could use the Bible and the supplemental textbook as well as lecture notes and other sources to complete the essay. By the time of her interview, Ms. Tudor had graded all of these essays. She remembered reading responses from some of the students who answered the essays just hoping to earn some extra points, while other students took their time, articulated what they were personally taking from their time in class, and discussed how it affected their lives. An “overarching” theme Ms. Tudor recognized in the essays from students who took the assignment seriously was their excitement about having the opportunity to interact with the Bible. The intimate contact with the Word of God was meaningful to them and several students again wrote, “It

opened my eyes.” This was especially true for some of the students who had grown up hearing a few Bible stories but because they had never read the Bible for themselves, they had no idea what it really meant. Some of the students, who considered themselves “believers” prior to the class, commented they “had never encountered the Bible one-on-one personally before.” Ms. Tudor commented about other students who identified accountability as a real value of the class because they “never had anyone holding them accountable to make sure they were reading it.”

Teacher’s Ending Challenge to the Students

Toward the end of the semester, Dr. Chambers challenged the students with the following remarks to encourage them to heed God’s word for their lives—to make positive changes, so God could bless their lives and use them to make a difference in the world around them. Dr. Chambers began with a scripture from Matthew 25:21, where Jesus told a story about a rich man and his slaves.

Jesus said, ‘You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master.’ This verse is not about career promotions; it’s a verse about the end of days and the future, eternal kingdom of God, where he promises joy you can’t even fathom. You need to quit being satisfied with sex before marriage, with being drunk, with being the most pretty or the most popular or the best athlete, or whatever. If that’s your goal—you’ve sold out. You don’t have a big enough dream. (Chambers)

Dr. Chambers was pleased with how the class turned out. He observed many students who “responded positively to the engagement and their spiritual need” by the end of the semester. Ms. Tudor agreed with Dr. Chambers but also remarked about how some students made it clear they were only in the class because they had to take it to graduate. She and Dr. Chambers were okay with that mindset. They realized some

students might have resented having to take the class, knowing that some minds would change over the term, while others would not. Dr. Chambers and Ms. Tudor remained optimistic about the long-term effects the course could have on such students. Ms. Tudor confidently stated, “I have seen a lot of seeds planted, a lot of students who may not have had questions before, but have questions now.” Dr. Chambers and Ms. Tudor hope and pray students will continue seeking answers and direction from God.

Revisiting Study Assumptions

The first assumption made prior to conducting this study was about how students would perceive their experiences in the required Bible course as an activity to promote their spiritual development rather than just academic exercises or busywork. The second assumption specified the results of this study would provide empirical evidence for the value of requiring Bible courses as part of a holistic approach to the development of students in Christian higher education. Two other closely related assumptions involved conducting face-to-face interviews in the belief they would provide rich data and bring better understanding of the students’ experiences; and the assumption students would be relaxed, open, honest, and authentic during their interviews. The results of this study support all four of these assumptions. All the participants in this study reported they experienced positive change in their lives, spiritually and in many other ways, with validation from the teacher’s interview. All of the interviews yielded more than 17 hours of actual interview time, which resulted in 405 pages of transcribed narrative. Finally, 13 students participated in the interviews, supporting the final assumption of having at least 10 students participating in the study.

Summary

This chapter provided a description of how data were generated, collected, and recorded. It explained the process used to track and manage the data for coding and thematic identification. The findings of the study were presented in two sections, the students and the teacher. The students' data organized into five domains: (a) Christian Spiritual Development, (b) Life and Relationship Changes, (c) The Christian-Focused Learning Environment, (d) Transitioning into College Away From Home, and (e) Thoughts on the Future. Five domains also emerged from the teacher's interview: (a) Course Goals and Objectives, (b) Requiring Students to Take the Course, (c) Religious Curriculum, (d) Relevance of God's Word: Applying What They Learned, and (e) Observations of Spiritual Growth and Development.

Through the voices of the participants, the findings of this study captured the essence of the students' experiences as to how and in what ways studying the Bible in a required academic classroom affected their lives, spiritually and in other ways. The chapter concluded with a look at the assumptions made before the study began and the evidence supporting them.

In chapter 5, I present a brief overview of the study and the conceptual framework. I discuss my interpretations of the findings, connect the findings to components of the conceptual framework, and triangulate student findings with data from the teacher's interview. I also discuss the findings in relationship to the concept of cognitive dissonance, an unconsidered theoretical perspective prior to data analysis.

CHAPTER 5: INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Overview of Study

Although student development has interested researchers for decades, empirical findings on students' spirituality and spiritual growth within higher education, especially Christian institutions, have remained limited (Astin et al., 2004b; Birkholz, 1994; Lindholm, 2004; Ma, 1999). Student enrollment on religiously affiliated institutions has increased nearly three-fold to that of public and private institutions (NCES, 2004). Few researchers have looked at what specific college courses, activities, or experiences influence college students' spiritual development (Moran, 2004). Within Christian institutions of higher learning, students' spiritual development is, at the very least, implied in their purpose or mission statements (MBU, 2010). Christian institutions placing high priority on the spiritual growth of students, regardless of the students' programs of study, have a unique responsibility to value spiritual, intellectual, and social development equally (Birkholz, 1994).

The purpose of this study was to explore 18-22 year-old female students' experiences when studying the Old Testament Bible as part of their required curriculum at Missouri Baptist University, a liberal arts evangelical Christian institution. Face-to-face interviews with 13 female students provided thick descriptions of their lived experiences during the semester-long class and gave testimony to how and in what ways studying the Bible in an academic setting affected their lives, spiritually and in other ways.

Research Questions

Central Research Question

Within the phenomenological tradition, this study explored and discovered answers to the following central research question:

How and in what ways did studying the Old Testament Bible in a course at a liberal arts evangelical Christian university affect female students' spiritual development?

Subresearch Questions

To aid in the exploration of the central research question, this study also explored and discovered answers to the following subquestions:

1. How did female students perceive their personal experiences as they related to the Bible course knowing they had to take it as part of their graduation requirement?
2. Did studying the Bible in a structured academic setting affect the female students' lives in other ways?
3. Were there any in-class or out-of-class activities or experiences throughout the term that particularly stood out for the female students as having an affect on them spiritually or in other ways?

During their lengthy face-to-face interviews, students first responded to a broad open-ended question about how the course affected their lives. This opening question allowed students to draw initially upon their most vivid memories during the semester. Students also responded to a few additional open-ended questions, which assisted in fully capturing the essence of the students' experiences (see Appendix A). Analysis and

reduction of the student data revealed the following five domains: (a) Christian Spiritual Development, (b) Life and Relationship Changes, (c) The Christian-Focused Learning Environment, (d) Transitioning into College Away From Home, and (e) Thoughts on the Future.

Evidence of Quality Findings

The techniques of data saturation, member checking, participant quotations, negative case analysis, completion of an audit trail, and the added role of external auditor provided persuasive evidence for the validity, credibility, and trustworthiness of these study results. An interview with the teacher, Dr. Chambers, and his classroom manager, Ms. Tudor, gave insight from their perspectives as to how the entire class responded as a whole to the experience of studying the Bible in a required classroom setting as well as noting some of their specific observations of students throughout the semester. The findings from their interview provided additional validation by triangulating their comments and perceptions with student findings, which further increased the credibility and trustworthiness of this study. There are numerous examples of triangulating evidence from the teacher's interview to the students' experiences integrated throughout the interpretation of findings.

Overview of the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework, which guided the interpretation of findings, was drawn from Thayer's (1996) dimensions of spirituality, based on Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, Fowler's (1981) stages and dimensions of faith

development, and Gibson's (2004) model for spiritual maturity, derived from Kohlberg's (1981) theory of moral reasoning.

Thayer's (1996) work on constructing and testing the Christian Spiritual Participation Profile (CSPP) within higher education linked Kolb's experiential learning theory to eight scales and four specific dimensions of spirituality. Kolb (1984) built his experiential learning model on the argument that "knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (p. 41). He suggested that students learn to not only grasp their concrete experiences but also think abstractly about their experiences through symbolic interaction with others. Experiences help establish a foundation for learning. Christians believe it is necessary to actively learn and study God's word as a way to know God personally and grow spiritually (Karasu, 2010).

Fowler (1981) built his seminal work on five stages of faith from Erikson's (1968) psychosocial, Piaget's (1971) cognitive, and Kohlberg's (1981) moral reasoning theories. Fowler suggested "faith, then, is an active mode of knowing. . . . [it] is our way of discerning and committing ourselves to centers of value and power that exert ordering force in our lives" (p. 24-25). According to Fowler, transitioning from Stage 3 to Stage 4 represented a critical one and the catalyst for moving into the higher stage often involved such events as clashing with authority, leaving home, starting college, and having exposure to new perspectives and experiences that generate self-examination and critical reflection on previously held values and beliefs. Holcomb and Nonneman (2004) found freshman students tend to enter college while still in Stage 2 or in early development of

Stage 3, and the types of catalytic events noted by Fowler were indeed quite germane to moving their study participants higher along the continuum of faith development.

Derived from Kohlberg's (1981) theory of moral reasoning, Gibson (2004) developed a model for spiritual maturity grounded in a Christian worldview and posited an inextricable link between moral development and spirituality existed. According to Gibson's model, as individuals mature spiritually they progress from level one, which is a state of actions guided solely by perceived rewards and punishment, to level four in which they not only act upon internalized values and principles but are also guided by a "Kingdom-centered locus of control" (p. 298). This means at the highest level of spiritual maturity, Christians would take action based on a shared vision to build God's kingdom by spreading his word to draw others to Christ as well as feeding and housing the homeless and challenging social injustice.

Interpretation of Findings and Discussion

Developed from the literature review for this study, the alignment of the conceptual framework is shown in Appendix C. I aligned the framework along dimensions or levels of faith and spiritual development as they related to learning theory. The students' experiences affected their lives in far-reaching and interdependent ways. As such, the interpretation of findings, as they related to each research question, are fully integrated within, discussed from the perspective of the conceptual framework, and organized by the students' domains discovered in the data.

Spirituality Linked to Experiential Learning, Moral, and Faith Development

While the answers to the research questions were multifaceted and profound, to encapsulate the essence of the students' experiences needs only two words—life changing. Reading and studying the Old Testament scriptures left an indelible mark on the students' hearts and minds.

Domain 1: Christian Spiritual Development

Central Research Question: How and In What Ways Did Studying the Old Testament Affect Spirituality?

Christian Faith and Spirituality

Christians believe spirituality is foundational to becoming a Christian and that spirituality combines having faith in God and his son, Jesus Christ, along with the works of the Holy Spirit, who is needed to transform lives (Johnson, 1989; Schneiders, 1990). They believe spirituality grows because one has faith in God and faith grows because the roots of the human spirit prepare the heart to have faith in God. Seeking God in all things requires faith, faith in God's sovereignty and a belief he fulfills his promises in the Bible. The students' stories revealed such an understanding of this link between the Christian faith and spirituality. All of the students confidently expressed their studies of the Old Testament connected them spiritually to God and strengthened their faith, which encouraged them to take a stand on what they personally believed.

Nearly all of the students' definition of having faith included a common thread of the following scripture from Hebrews 11:1. "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not yet seen." The students recognized having faith meant

stepping out of their comfort zone and trusting God would always be there to love them, support them, and forgive them.

Students encountered life-changing experiences while studying the Old Testament scriptures, which increased their faith in the sovereignty and omnipresence of God. Their encounter with God through scriptures revealed a personal living God and the majority of the students used the word “changed” when describing the many ways studying scriptures affected their lives. For instance, Arlene commented, “Being forced to be in the Bible has changed a lot of things. It’s changed my life.” Barbara stated, I’ve realized, you know, the course has changed my attitude and whatever I do now, I am going to be happy as long as I do it for the glory of God.”

In particular, the in-depth study of Genesis and the biblical account of creation raised students’ awareness of the realness of God as they reflected on scriptures and everything God created. For example, Elaine recalled looking at some sweet potatoes she and her roommate were going to eat one evening and made an immediate connection to her study of creation. She remembered telling her roommate, “God created this ugly thing that was in the ground and now we are going to eat it.” When asked why that was so meaningful to her, she stated, “I have so much more appreciation for little things in life now because of this class.” Collette stated she had developed “a heightened appreciation for God’s creation and the beauty in the world” because of her in-depth study of God’s word. Arlene made a connection between her upcoming career as a biology teacher and the story of creation when she stated, “[I have] always believed in creation, but the study of Genesis confirmed it and will help me teach biology.” Linda summed up the confident

voices of the students about how their faith in God developed throughout the term when she stated, “I now feel like every time I seek God I find him. Even though you can’t feel him, he’s always real.”

Overall, the students defined spirituality as having a personal and intimate relationship with God. For example, Barbara confidently remarked about how spirituality was the “internalization of God, of having God at the center of your heart—having God as your king.” Elaine stated confidently about how her spirituality required having a “deep relationship [and] friendship” with God.

Students believed the university’s requirement to take the Old Testament History course as part of their graduation requirements had great influence on their spiritual walk with God and recognized how studying and reflecting on the Old Testament scriptures fostered spiritual growth. For instance, Collette said, “This class has affected me definitely. I’ve grown a lot spiritually since I started this class.” Felicia stated, “Mine [spirituality] has definitely been changed for the better because of my experiences in the Old Testament course.” Elaine captured the collective voices of the students about how studying the scriptures affected their spiritual lives when she stated, “It has been challenged; it’s been affirmed; It’s grown and I yearn for more of it.”

The students attributed their life-changing experiences to studying and reflecting on scriptures, which has provided evidence for a link between spirituality and faith development. Fowler (1981) deemed life-changing experiences were a vitally important dimension of faith development and the human experience of spiritually connecting to God. As such, the students in this study experienced the catalytic effects of life-changing

experiences on their human hearts, as revealed to them through personal application of scriptures. This promoted a spiritual connection with God, which helped move them along the continuum of faith and spiritual development.

Triangulation with teacher findings. Ms. Tudor and Dr. Chambers provided validation for how studying the Bible affected the students' faith and spiritual development. Based on her intimate interaction with grading all of the students' coursework, Ms. Tudor recognized students had begun to mature some in their Christian walk. She described some of the students by the end of the term as being on a "spiritual quest" having shown some progress in their spiritual lives because of how they connected their experiences to personal application of scriptures.

Dr. Chambers commented about a female student who approached him one day after class. She told him about how God's sovereignty had become real to her that day in class and how she had begun to realize God's faithfulness was there for her and how she could trust God for the rest of her life. The week prior to his interview, Dr. Chambers remembered another female student who approached him on his way back to his office. She thanked him "for asking me to read the Bible for myself." Dr. Chambers recalled the student was excited about having the opportunity to engage in scriptures in a personal and intimate way. During their discussion, the student acknowledged hearing many scriptures from her priest, but she told Dr. Chambers until his Old Testament class, "I never knew how to find it in the Bible." This comment has offered additional validation for the current findings, as students in this study reported they had connected spiritually to God by studying the Bible for themselves.

God's Faithfulness and Forgiveness

Without question, the historical timeline of the Old Testament studies took the students on a transformational learning and spiritual journey chronicling thousands of years and 5 eras, covering such major events as the creation, flood, patriarchs, Egyptian bondage, wandering in the wilderness, the years of judges then kings, and the divided kingdoms to the rebuilding of the temple and Jerusalem. The Israelites cycle of following God, turning away, repenting, paying the consequences, only to repeat the sequence over again, became meaningful to the students because they learned of God's endless faithfulness, forgiveness, mercy, justice, provisions, and protection. This prominent theme flowed throughout the students' stories—God's love remained steadfast and faithful to an unfaithful people.

Children are expected to have faith in their earthly fathers' love, not merely by the words, *I love you*, but by his actions, his expressions of love. Fathers are expected to unselfishly provide for their children's needs and support them emotionally and physically. A loving father should inspire his children to live in truth (Kimmel, 2005). When children disappoint or disobey their fathers, they find ways to show love and forgiveness to their children through fair and balanced discipline, with justice and mercy (Kimmel). Because the scriptures revealed this is the kind of love, faithfulness, and forgiveness to the students, they personally related to the cycles of Israel. For example, Barbara, Felicia, and Dori, respectively, typified how the students identified with Israel's cycle in their own lives. "The Lord was faithful to Israel. . . . I have realized I am Israel." "The Old Testament is so relevant to today. . . . It's just like an everyday occurrence in

life today.” “History replays itself . . . and we’re going through the same struggles.” From the Christian perspective, faith and learning are interdependent.

The students’ stories about how they connected their personal lives to the comings and goings of the Israelites provided further evidence for a link between spirituality, faith development, and experiential learning. During the semester, the interaction between students’ faith and studying the scriptures encouraged them to engage in reflective observation, which helped apply spiritual lessons to their own lives (Kolb, 1984). As they took ownership of the scriptures, they connected spiritually to God and engaged in what Thayer (1996) referred to as a Faith Quest, which also helped them move along the continuum proposed by Gibson (2004) for maturing spirituality.

Triangulation with teacher findings. Dr. Chambers and Ms. Tudor observed the personal connection students made with Israel and God’s unending forgiveness and faithfulness. Dr. Chambers remembered observing students shedding tears in the classroom as they learned about God’s faithfulness to an unfaithful people, time-and-time again. Ms. Tudor witnessed a transition in the students’ writings. They began the course with writings nearly disengaged from their readings but ended the course by “personalizing” what they had learned. As with the common theme found throughout the students’ narratives, Ms. Tudor confirmed the students not only kept returning in their written assignments to how faithful God was to the unfaithful and undeserving people of Israel but also how they saw themselves no differently than the Israelites at times. She also recognized a “searching” in the students’ writing as they reflected on the story of

Job, trying to understand and finding meaning in why he was afflicted and how it possibly compared to the hardships they were going through.

Scriptures Encouraged Internalized Values and Beliefs

As the students progressed through the Bible course, they certainly found themselves internalizing scriptures and recognized they were adopting or honing their own personal values and beliefs about God. For example, Arlene stated, “I was raised in church so that’s all I knew. But, it didn’t mean anything personal to me; it’s what my parents believed in.” Arlene realized she began internalizing God’s words during the semester and stated, “It makes sense for my life now!” Collette summed it up by saying, “Now, it’s not living off the relationship that my parents had with God . . . it’s me and God now!”

The students internalized the values and principles of the 10 Commandments. Before taking the Bible course, students reported the fear of punishment tended to serve as their moral compass. By the end of the course, students reported their motivation to live a better Christian life came about because they discovered the sacredness of the Holy Scriptures and wanted to please God first rather than out of fear of retribution or punishment.

The students’ change in motivation to live a more pleasing life for God has provided evidence for a link between spirituality, experiential learning, faith, and moral development. Studying the Bible in an academic setting helped the students’ mature spirituality. Based on Gibson’s (2004) perspective on spirituality indicators, the students moved from level 2 of spiritual maturity, which relies on external sources of authority

such as parents' rules and discipline and the strictly punitive perception of the 10 Commandments, to level 3, as they started exercising newly internalized principles and values. Students began to comprehend what they were learning and applied it to their own lives by engaging in what Kolb (1984) referred to as abstract conceptualization. Thayer (1996) connected this type of experiential learning to her Vision scale, which associated spirituality with thinking abstractly about one's life in relationship with God. As the students internalized principles and values based on their reflections about what they learned, they also experienced a shift in their recognized sources of authority as the basis for what they personally believed, a vitally important element of moral development represented in Fowler's (1981) faith development and Gibson's (2004) spiritual maturity indicators. Neal (1998) also agreed as Christians internalize scriptures they experience a transformation and grow spiritually because they have taken ownership of the scriptures.

Triangulation with teacher findings. Dr. Chambers identified the 10 Commandments as an important component of the curriculum, which helped validate the students' experiences. He encouraged his students to know and reflect on the 10 Commandments. He wanted them to not only understand the 10 Commandments were moral requirements, but also realize "works of the law" could not make them right with God. He stressed to them it was only by recognizing their need for the Savior, the acceptance of Jesus as the promised Messiah of the Old Testament.

Dr. Chambers also remembered observing students during their classroom discussions about Jeremiah. From his observations of students that day, he sensed they

had begun to realize the tremendous value of God's faithfulness and forgiveness in their own lives by noting some enlightened student expressions as they realized "this is about me" now. Ms. Tudor offered further validation based on the students' homework assignments because she noticed a difference in their writings throughout the semester as they started personally "applying it more to their lives."

Meaning and Purpose

Grimmitt (1994) and Parks' (1991) suggested spiritual values provide the foundation for purpose and meaning in life. The students' experiences in the Old Testament course helped them realize having a personal and intimate relationship with the Lord, actively telling others about him, seeking his will for their lives, and acting as God's agents to help others in need directly related to having meaning and purpose in their own lives. Prior to the course, several students reported they tied their meaning and purpose in life to getting good grades, going to class, choosing the best possible major, graduating, and finding the right job with the right pay. By the end of the course, nearly all of the students recognized having meaning in life meant sensing and responding to a call on their lives from God to tell others about him and act as his agent to help others in need. Because of her Old Testament studies, Gail realized God had a purpose for her life. She stated, "Learning about how God called Israel, it showed me that God has a call on his people and so I know that God has a call for me." By the end of the course, Elaine had this to say about studying scriptures and having meaning and purpose in her life: "It has just solidified what I have grown to believe about who I am and what my purpose is [which] is to be his child and to grow as that and to worship and love life through him!"

Arlene's comment appropriately echoed many of the students' shared eye-opening discovery about having meaning and purpose in their lives when she stated, "I never considered God in my plan at all. . . . I got my purpose from what I thought I needed to get done—just from my plan."

The students' heightened clarity about having meaning and purpose in their lives provided further evidence for a link between spirituality, faith development and experiential learning. Students read scriptures, reflected on them, and applied what they learned to their own lives (Kolb, 1984). Thayer (1996) connected reflective observation to the Faith Quest dimension of spirituality. Students realized the need to seek the will of the Lord in their lives, which brought clarity and new understanding about what it meant to have meaning and purpose. Fowler (1981) also believed faith would continue to develop as individuals spiritually connected to God as the ultimate source for having meaning and purpose in their lives. As the literature suggested, the students found scriptures replete with faith-building examples for having meaning and purpose in their lives and discovered the importance of seeking God's will early on (Johnson, 1989).

Triangulation with teacher findings. Dr. Chambers and Ms. Tudor provided validation for the students' heightened understanding about having meaning and purpose in their lives. Dr. Chambers told the students one day in class "to quite dreaming small dreams [and be] determined to find out how big God is so they might have a vision for their lives appropriate to the greatness of God." He remembered observing the students' reactions, noting they appeared "stirred by that, because they want a purpose in their lives bigger than themselves." Ms. Tudor recalled a shift in the students' written work as she

sensed a stronger desire to love God, seek his will and purpose for their lives, and walk by faith to accept salvation through grace and not by any personal accomplishments or works of their own. She recalled reading such statements as, “I’ve never believed this before, but wow, God opened my eyes.”

Commitment to Reading and Sharing God’s Word

Before their experiences in the Bible course, some students remembered feeling frustrated when trying to read the Bible. For instance, Barbara stated, “I was one who tried to read the Old Testament a couple of times and got frustrated and it was like, there’s no point!” By the end of the course she spoke confidently about how her experiences in the class along with Dr. Chambers’ passion “greatly affected” her attitude about reading the Bible. She realized, “You can apply it to everyday life. Applying his [Dr. Chambers] passion has ignited my passion and I enjoy reading the Bible more now.” Early in the term, Dori experienced similar frustration. She stated, “Oh, I used to be like, it’s so many pages to read or oh my God what am I going to do. Now, it’s not that I have to read it, I want to read it!” She found there was great suspense in the Bible and began looking forward to “what’s gone to happen next.” Throughout the semester, the students recognized how God had revealed powerful truths through the Old Testament scriptures and its history. They developed a new perspective about the importance of studying the Bible and 11 of the 13 students commented about having a sincere intention to maintain the daily habit of reading they developed during the semester.

Studying the Old Testament encouraged the students to speak more authoritatively about the Bible with others, especially non-Christians. Prior to the course,

Arlene felt intimidated to talk about the Bible with others. She attributed her increased confidence to speak more authoritatively about God's word to the Bible knowledge she gained over the semester. Even the students who attended Christian high schools or at least lived in homes with Bibles did not remember engaging in personal discussions with others about scriptures before taking the class. By reading and studying the scriptures within their academic setting, the students experienced a new boldness for discussing and sharing God's word because, as Jackie stated, "It brings up discussion points that I really didn't have before. . . . [The Bible course] really opened up doors and then I can bring in the Old Testament."

The students' newly found confidence for sharing God's word with others has provided evidence for a link between spirituality, faith, and experiential learning. Students transformed their new knowledge into action as they engaged in what Kolb (1984) referred to as active experimentation, from which Thayer (1996) derived her New Life scale. Thayer posited the New Life scale connected spirituality to experiential learning by measuring the transformation of new knowledge through one's evangelism and service—a form of spirituality-in-action. While Scott (2004) suggested prayer was a form of spirituality-in-action, prayer tends to be a privately experienced connection to God; whereas when others actively share God's word, their actions become the instruments through which God works.

Learning From the Life of David

Clearly, God's steady love, faithfulness, and forgiveness throughout the Old Testament became a major source of inspiration for the students. They especially related

to the life of David—his vulnerability and imperfections. As a prominent and pivotal character in the Bible, God chose David as a man after his own heart and blessed David beyond compare. The recount of David’s life led students to think of him as somewhat of a hypocrite and irresponsible mess-up. The students expressed hope for their own redemption because God forgave David and his human frailties and saved him from the grips of sin that led him to fail as a godly father, deceive others, and plot murder. Barbara and Maggie expressed the students’ personal connection to the life of David quite nicely. “David is my favorite person in the Bible because he reminds me of myself.” “I fail and make mistakes and if God can name him king . . . and he made all of those mistakes then little o’ me . . . I’ll be okay too and he will forgive me.”

The students started to claim God’s gift of forgiveness and salvation for themselves, which has provided further evidence of how studying scriptures helped students to mature spiritually and develop a stronger faith in God (Fowler, 1981; Gibson, 2004). The students took their own concrete experiences in life, reflected on them, and connected their lives, their sin, to the life of David and God’s redemption (Kolb, 1984). Thayer (1996) connected spirituality with Kolb’s concept of grasping concrete experiences on her Religious Experience scale as an indicator of one personally sensing and experiencing God’s presence.

Triangulation with teacher results. While grading student papers, Ms. Tudor remembered reading about how students’ started to recognize their previous knowledge of Bible stories, prior to taking the course, was one sided. She recalled reading their comments about knowing of only “great people making all these great decisions” and all

of the positive stories about David and how “he was a man who was after God’s own heart.” They never heard about all of David’s failures. Unbeknownst to Ms. Tudor, she validated the personal connection students made with the life of David and the statement given by Maggie above, when she recalled the following common thread within the writings of various student essays: “If all of these people can make mistakes and God can forgive them, well maybe he can forgive me too.”

Prayer, Praise, and Worship

Results indicated prayer, praise, and worship became areas of spiritual development for the students. Twelve of the 13 students commented they currently approached prayer differently than before they started the class. They recognized their prayers had matured some because of studying scriptures. For instance, Elaine stated, “This class has enhanced my prayer life by praying more. The Old Testament certainly shows that God wanted his people to pray.” Linda excitedly stated during her interview, “I’ve been poured into more by this class so I want to get it out to God more. . . . I’ve been more faithful about praying.” For the first time in her life, Collette started praying over the scriptures as she read them, asking God to help her understand the scriptures better so she could “make them applicable” to her life.

Holmes (1980) suggested prayer has both an action and receptive mode of consciousness. This involves logical and analytical skills along with personal surrender to God’s power, personal intuition, the association of symbols and rituals, and meditation as well as speculative and affective illumination. For Christians, prayer and worship are

spiritual acts, which would be meaningless without faith and belief in a real God who not only listened but also responded.

Studying scriptures led students to comprehend the joy and pleasure God experiences from the prayer, praise, and worship of his people. They sincerely appreciated how scriptures revealed prayer as an intimate and conversational relationship with God while providing them with countless examples about the pleasure he experiences through praise and worship. For example, Linda stated, “How awesome God must feel to look down and see people bowing down to him and singing praises to him!” They realized personal prayer, praise, and worship belonged hand-in-hand with studying the scriptures if they were to grow spiritually as Christians. During the semester, the students came to realize they did not always have to be down formally on their knees to pray.

Studying scriptures helped students to recognize they had begun to worship differently or found new ways to worship God because of their Bible studies. For instance, Felicia started awakening each morning in her dorm room to devotional music instead of a harsh alarm because she wanted to meditate on scriptures and godly messages as a way to help prepare her heart for worship and prayer throughout the day. Elaine, Barbara, and Jackie, respectively, summed up the students’ maturing perspective on prayer and worship nicely as they stated, “Prayer isn’t just, help me with this, help me with that; it’s building a relationship.” “I’ve realized it’s a conversational relationship and just like with a best friend you don’t just tell all of your problems, I know I have to listen.” “This course has given me things to worship about!”

The students' lived experiences with prayer, praise, and worship during the semester have provided evidence of the link between spirituality, faith, and experiential learning. Thayer (1996) connected spirituality to reflective observation and personal meaning making on her Faith Quest scale, which flow from religious experiences such as reading scriptures, praying, and worshipping God (Kolb, 1984). As students reflected on and internalized scriptures they emerged with a new understanding of what it meant to have a friend-to-friend conversational style relationship with God and started to perceive prayer, praise, and worship as spirituality-in-action (Scott, 2004).

Domain 2: Life and Relationship Changes

Research Subquestion: Did Studying the Bible in a Structured Academic Setting Affect the Female Students' Lives In Other Ways

Lifestyle Changes

Students made some positive changes in their lifestyles, which suggest they may have sensed some separation in their spiritual connection to God because of certain behaviors. For instance, Collette made an important connection between lifestyle and spirituality. She declared, "Spirituality is taking your relationship with God beyond saying things with your mouth to people and actually living a lifestyle that is different." Some students stopped drinking alcohol and attending wild parties because the scriptures revealed to them such behaviors were not pleasing to God. As Maggie stated, "I was more the typical college student 4 months ago. . . . went out on weekends and drank. . . . I have matured. . . I wish this class had come earlier in my life." Some students changed their choice of music, experienced better anger control, or changed their language

because scriptures spoke to their hearts and they realized those areas of their lives were not honoring God. For instance, Dori stated, “I learned how to contain myself at times even when I just want to have outrage.” A few of the students became more health conscience and began watching what they put into their bodies and focusing on getting more sleep because they learned they were “a temple of God” and wanted to please God.

The students’ attributed their deliberate lifestyle changes to a new understanding of the 10 Commandments, which led to a change in their motivation for honoring them. This provided supportive evidence for a link between spirituality, moral development, and experiential learning. Fowler (1981) and Gibson (2004) linked faith and spirituality to moral development through the internalization of values and beliefs. As scriptures helped the students internalize their own spiritual values and beliefs, they applied them to their own lives and envisioned a closer spiritual relationship with God was possible by making some positive changes in their lifestyles and attitudes.

These results have also supported the findings of previous research, which reported a negative association between religiosity and delinquent behaviors, risk taking, and drug use (Benson et al., 2003).

Relationship and Attitude Changes

Nearly all of the students reported having better interpersonal relationships with friends and family because of studying scriptures. Many of the students believed they were much closer to their parents and related better to them by the end of the course than before starting it because they believed studying the Bible helped them grow in spirit and out of their rebellious stage. For instance, Jackie stated she had a “very up and down

relationship” with her parents prior to the start of the course. By the end of the semester, Jackie realized she had started building a better relationship with them. Dori realized she had been taking her “family for granted” and had not appreciated her parents. She stated, “So, studying the Bible has actually brought me closer to them.” Arlene was confident the study of scriptures changed her attitude about getting along with her parents. She stated, “Now, I just feel like I’m growing closer to God and that is helping me grow closer to my family and just understand everything, especially my parents.” Linda talked at length about how studying scriptures helped her recognize she had an unhealthy relationship with a friend, which had become an idol in her life. She stated, “I’ve been letting go and giving distance to restore our hearts completely back to God.”

The majority of the students also experienced some other attitude changes because of studying scriptures. They realized they had become less judgmental about themselves as well as others. Several of the students expressed having a different outlook about their own self-image and self-worth because they learned they were “made in the image of God.” Students began to love themselves more because they realized how much God loved them. Elaine’s profound statement summed up the students’ overall motivation for making positive changes in their lives when she stated, “The class has definitely awakened me to being aware of how I think, how I act, and how I dress.”

The students’ attributed the positive changes in their relationships and attitudes to learning scriptures and reflecting on what God spoke to them during the semester, which provided additional evidence for a link between experiential learning and spiritual development (Kolb, 1984; Gibson, 2004; Thayer, 1996).

As both Fowler (1981) and Gibson (2004) incorporated moral reasoning theory into their work, they would likely agree the students' personal application of scriptures and changes in their lifestyles and attitudes should not be surprising outcomes because the Old Testament is replete with moral and ethical teachings to guide and orient believers on their Christian journey throughout life (Johnson, 1989).

Triangulation with teacher results. Dr. Chambers provided some validation for the students' experiences. Throughout the term, Dr. Chambers encouraged students to search their hearts and the scriptures because God's word promised to provide them hope and answers for "their fears, their hurts, their sin, and their recognition of the problem." One of Dr. Chambers' goals during the lessons on the 10 Commandments was to help students think about where their levels of moral awareness and moral formation were before the class started and then after they completed the Old Testament course. He told the students, "[It is] God's will that they follow these principles because it is for their own good and because God is a good God and wants good things for his people."

Dr. Chambers also started the semester with the goal of helping students take ownership of all of the Commandments by internalizing their principles because he knew only then would they have meaning externally for the students. Dr. Chambers cited the fifth Commandment as, "Honor your father and mother, that your days may be prolonged." During the class discussions, he stressed to the students, "You just don't honor your parents because you are supposed to, you honor them because it pleases God." As discussed, this revelation became evident in the students' stories. By the end of the course, the students recognized the sacredness of scriptures and internalized the moral

principles of the 10 Commandments. Pleasing God had become a primary motivator for honoring their parents and living an overall better Christian life, rather than being motivated out of fear of punishment. The students not only experienced better relationships with their parents and friends, they also made several important lifestyle changes because they internalized biblical principles for learning how to live a life pleasing to God.

Domain 3: The Christian-Focused Learning Environment

Research Subquestion: Were There Any In-Class or Out-of-Class Activities or Experiences Throughout the Term That Particularly Stood Out For the Female Students as Having an Affect on Them Spiritually or in Other Ways?

Overall Christian Environment and Teachers as Christian Role Models

Not only did the Old Testament Bible course surpass the students' expectations, the university's overall focus on the integration of faith and learning did as well, which was something all 13 students recognized as having positive effect on their lives during the semester. For instance, from Arlene's perspective, the "whole Christian environment" was a positive aspect of attending the university. Because faculty integrated faith and learning across the curriculum, students remarked about how easy it was to connect what they learned from the Old Testament scriptures to other course content, which they believed made scriptures even more relevant to their every day lives. For instance, Maggie talked about her excitement grew during the semester as she realized she was constantly making connections between her new knowledge of the Old Testament and courses like Health and Wellness as well as with her job in the retail industry.

MBU teachers came across in the classroom as being intentional about their own Christian faith and sincerely interested in the lives of their students, noted by the majority of students during their interviews. The students greatly appreciated Dr. Chambers and perceived all of their MBU teachers as having a genuine Christian life, in and out of the classroom. The students were grateful teachers expressed sincere interest in their personal lives as well as academically. For instance, Irene remarked about how, “they care about you. I know they care about the individuals—not just about their grades but about what they are going through.” Elaine started her first semester in college with some uncertainty about the Christian environment and the influence Christian teachers would have on her. She initially kept her hopes in check to lessen potential disappointment. By the end of the semester she confidently stated, “I haven’t been disappointed. I have high standards now!”

While students learned about the power of prayer throughout their studies of the Old Testament, they also experienced it in other classrooms. The majority of the students remarked about how much they looked forward to going to all of their classes because teachers prayed in class, often praying for their personal needs. For instance, Jackie stated, “Teachers pray at the beginning of class—that makes me so happy!” Because Irene came from a public high school, praying in class was a “brand new thing” for her. She spoke confidently about how it strengthened her faith because “teachers pray before class.” Hailey captured the students’ perception of the teachers and their efforts to integrate faith and learning when she stated, “[they are] out there with their faith. They

don't hide it; they don't conceal it. . . . It's really encouraging to see adult figures in the classroom setting living for Christ.”

Students' acknowledged their concrete experiences with their teachers and the overall Christian environment was part of their overall religious experience during the semester, which provided additional evidence for a link between experiential learning and spiritual development. Students grasped their concrete experiences related to their personal interactions with faculty and the overall Christian environment, which related to Thayer's (1996) Religious Experience scale. Experiencing a prayerful learning environment within classrooms became a factor in moving students along in their faith and spiritual development (Fowler, 1981; Gibson, 2004).

The influential role of the teachers also provided additional support for previous research, which indicated when Christian professors integrated their faith into the learning process they not only contributed to the spiritual development of their students through their Bible knowledge but also by personal example, in and out of the classroom (Birkholz, 1994).

Triangulation with teacher findings. Dr. Chambers confirmed the connection he, as a teacher, had with the students. He remarked more than once about how students tended to accompany him back to his office after class. He commented about how they wanted to either talk to him more about the spiritual connection they made in class or have prayer about something resonating with them that day in class in regards to personal issues they were struggling with in their lives. He referred to such students as those who had become “spiritually engaged” in what they were learning. Ms. Tudor offered

additional validation. She remembered some students' essays included comments about how personal stories from teachers helped them connect what they were learning in scriptures to their own lives. Ms. Tudor also noted she remembered reading in students' essays about how excited they were with having the opportunity to interact with the Bible on such an intimate level and how real it had become for their own lives. She remarked even those who considered themselves "believers" coming into the course commented they "had never encountered the Bible one-on-one personally before." This connects back to the student who remembered her priest using scriptures but never knew how to find them in the Bible for herself.

Research Subquestion: How Did Female Students Perceive Their Personal Experiences as They Related to the Bible Course Knowing They Had to Take It as Part of Their Graduation Requirement?

Requiring the Bible Course

Because students reported they greatly valued their experiences in the Old Testament course, none of them resented having to take it as a graduation requirement. They realized their personal experiences during the class actually exceeded the initial expectations they had before taking the Bible course. For instance, Barbara stated she remembered feeling mad at first when she learned the course was required for all undergraduate students. As she reflected back on her semester, she stated with a confident smile, "Seriously, this class has been the purpose of my maturation and my walk with God during the semester." Students recognized the great value in requiring the

Bible course for all undergraduates, especially during the freshman year, because, as several students commented during their interviews, it “plants seeds” in the unbelievers.

Triangulation with teacher findings. Dr. Chambers and Ms. Tudor provided validation for students’ appreciation for having to take the course. They admitted they always had a few students at the end of the semester that made it clear on their course evaluations they resented having to take the class and only wanted to squeeze by with a passing grade. They also acknowledged while some students might have started the class that way they actually finished the semester with a different outlook. Ms. Tudor confidently stated during the present semester she had “seen a lot of seeds planted, a lot of students who may not have had questions before, but have questions now.” As she was solely responsible for grading the students’ assignments, she always worked hard to communicate clearly to the students they could disagree completely with something and state what they believed. She wanted to see evidence they had engaged in critically thinking about what they learned and to make sure they knew that was the only bases for their grades.

Dr. Chambers stated he encouraged the students to “search with integrity” knowing scriptures planted seeds in Christians as well as non-Christian students. He acknowledged that while it was not his direct responsibility to “solve their spiritual problems” he was okay with them sensing some despair or hopelessness during the course until God could “open their eyes” and realize they could not “earn the favor of God.” Ms. Tudor confirmed some students wrote about having some feelings of despair and hopelessness because “they thought they had been self-sufficient all along” but

realized somewhere during the semester they could not earn their salvation and needed God to lead and direct their lives.

Gaining Perspective and Having Accountability

The majority of students acknowledged the value of learning in an environment that encouraged them to share their own opinions because, as Elaine stated, “Getting different perspectives is really important to define who you are as a Christian.” Irene stressed how seeing things from other perspectives had “been eye opening” and stated, “They will have come from a different background than me and I’ve been able to see theirs [perspective] and I’ve been able to cement what I actually believe.”

Students believed they developed more clarity about their own faith and beliefs because they were exposed to different perspectives, which led them to engaging in more meaningful reflections about who they were and what they believed. Such reflective learning (Kolb, 1984) has provided additional evidence for the link between spirituality, faith, and experiential learning (Fowler, 1981; Gibson, 2004; Thayer, 1996). Thayer connected reflective learning to her Faith Quest scale. As students reflected on different perspectives and the meaning of their experiences, they emerged with a better understanding of who they were and what they believed as Christians. Such understanding of the value of learning from different perspectives provided evidence of students moving higher in Fowler’s stages of faith. For instance, Fowler suggested the catalyst for moving from Stage 3 of faith development into Stage 4 often involved exposure to new perspectives because they generated self-examination and critical reflection on previously held values and beliefs. He noted, such a transition represented a

time of dual development where self-identity and worldviews differentiate “from those of others and become acknowledged factors in the reactions, interpretations and judgments one makes on the actions of the self and others” (Fowler, p. 182). As students reflected on and synthesized new ideas, they became building blocks for applied learning and contributed to their maturing spirituality and Christian faith.

Students also recognized great value in the corporate study of scriptures because of the concept of accountability, not just being accountable to earn a grade from the teacher, but to each other. For instance, Elaine stated, “I have met friends here who have been trying to hold me accountable, and I them, as Christians to read our Bible and do homework.” She was grateful for the accountability, especially when friends asked her, “Have you fellowshiped at all today? Have you read?” During her interview, Irene also realized she was grateful to classmates for holding her accountable. She noted it sometimes took only a simple, “Are you reading your Bible” to help get her back on track.

Students’ acceptance of and appreciation for accountability could also be linked back to their shift in motivation to honor the 10 Commandments and recognized sources of authority as the basis for what they personally believed, a vitally important element of faith, spiritual, and moral development (Fowler’s, 1981; Gibson, 2004).

Triangulation with teacher results. During the interview, Ms. Tudor remarked about students commenting in their writings about the value they saw in having not only the teacher holding them accountable to read and study the Bible as a course requirement, but also having classmates hold them accountable.

Domain 4: Transitioning into College Away From Home

The Freshman Experience

The students' experiences during the semester became both inspirational and meaningful to the participants of this study, especially for the 10 first-time freshman, who represented an average age of 18.7 years. The narratives of these new freshman students indicated the scriptures they studied during the Old Testament course quickly became not only a valued spiritual anchor for them but also an emotional one. They found themselves out of their comfort zone and far away from their homes and families, dealing with the absence of friends and loneliness as well as struggling with serious emotional challenges such as family tragedies and cancer scares. For example, Felicia remarked about the requirement of having to study the Old Testament during her first semester in college, and stated, "It helped me in my transition because I was kind of a baby about going to school and it was hard for me to adjust for a while."

Spiritual Strength and Faith

The lived experiences of the students in this study, especially the freshman students, marked a time of critical reflection, translation of symbols, and meaning making, which ministered to them spiritually and emotionally, especially during some serious personal crises. For example, Karen reported she lost her father shortly after the semester started and then faced an additional personal crisis later in the term while awaiting the results of what turned out to be a benign biopsy. At the end of the term she had this to say, "Studying the Bible and scriptures like the one that says if you humble yourself and seek my face and turn from your wicked ways then I will heal you, forgive

you, helped me this semester.” Karen expressed confidently she would not have made it through the term without the comfort and spiritual strength she gained from studying the scriptures. Other students such as Linda and Hailey also appreciated the timing of the Bible course during their first semester of college because it provided opportunities for them to walk by faith, lean on God, and grow spiritually stronger. Hailey summed up the overall sentiments of the new freshmen students about how the Bible course helped them transition into college and gain spiritual strength when she stated, “I know I am supposed to be here [MBU]. . . . and even if I don’t see him, it’s really comforting to know that I don’t have to rely on myself.”

The students’ experiences while transitioning into college have provided evidence for the link between faith and spiritual development. Kessler (1998) suggested crises experienced between adolescence and emerging adulthood instilled a sense of urgency for transcendence, which Fowler marked as part of transitioning from Stage 3 of faith development into Stage 4. Fowler suggested the catalyst for moving into the more developed Stage 4 of faith not only included exposure to new perspectives but also starting college and leaving home. As such, the students framed their lived experiences within their evolving biblical worldview, applied scriptures to their lives, and reported they found spiritual strength to face their transition into college and deal with personal crises by placing their faith and trust in God. As the students gained faith and trust in God to take care of them during their first semester in college, they experienced spiritual growth (Gibson, 2004).

The evidence for how students gained spiritual strength to cope with the transition into college and personal tragedy has also provided support for the findings of Holcomb and Nonneman (2004), who found when college students dealt with emotional crises they experienced spiritual growth. Based on their work with female adolescents, Bruce and Cockreham (2004) posited spiritual growth would occur during the stressful transition into young adulthood as long as individuals found ways to manage their emotional pain and if group experiences included “messages of hope, encouragement, and spiritual connections” (p. 341). The students’ stories in this study provided testimony to how the scriptures communicated such messages, which helped ease the students’ transition into college and their path into emerging adulthood.

Triangulation with teacher results. During her interview, Ms. Tudor shared about her interaction with a female student who experienced tragedy and personal loss during her first semester away from home. Unbeknownst to Ms. Tudor that Karen participated in the student interviews, she shared Karen’s story about the loss of her father as well as other personal challenges Karen faced during the term. Upon Karen’s return to MBU, Ms. Tudor interacted a great deal with her outside the classroom by offering personal and academic support. Ms. Tudor remarked about how well Karen seemed to cope with the loss of her father and her own personal health scare as well as the overwhelming struggles of catching up with all of the work she missed. Because of her close contact with Karen, Ms. Tudor believed the “class had great impact on her” because she observed a peace and calmness in Karen she considered rare for a young person experiencing such difficult circumstances.

Ms. Tudor also commented about how she saw evidence of students' spiritual growth throughout the semester. For instance, she recalled reading essays in which some students wrote about how they experienced some despair in their own abilities throughout the semester. She stated, "I have seen several students who . . . once thought they could do it themselves but they know now by reading the Bible and through this class that they cannot do it on their own."

Domain 5: Thoughts on the Future

The Old Testament course began a new leg of the students' spiritual journey, as they began realizing their search for answers to such questions as, "Who am I?" or "What is God's will for my life?" While studying the Old Testament gave them some answers, students recognized they now have many more questions at the end of the course than when they first started. Rather than experiencing overwhelming uncertainty, the students sensed a new direction for their lives and began to envision their future differently. A common assertion from the majority of the students was their "eyes have been opened" because of their experiences in the Bible course. For instance, Dori stated, "I think my future is going to hold a lot more than I thought it would or thought it could be."

Because the students believed Dr. Chambers helped them learn to explore the many connections between scriptures and life, marriage, family, and parenting, they started viewing the Bible as an indispensable resource and guide for their everyday lives as well as their future roles as wives and mothers. For instance, Dori stated she will "plug the Bible into" her kids from the beginning, and Elaine acknowledged she had set the new goal in life "to be a godly wife." Hailey remarked she "will work that [biblical

truths] into” her marriage someday. Some students either selected a different major during the semester because of their experiences in the class or were strongly considering changing to a religion major, so it would help them integrate their faith and learning throughout their lives and careers. For instance, Hailey talked about how God had revealed many things to her through the study of scriptures and she was excited about the possibility of changing to a religion major because, as she stated about her experiences in the Old Testament Bible course, “It’s changed my life!”

Students also acknowledged they no longer worried as much about how much money they would earn or the many unknowns for their future because, as Barbara stated, “The amount of money I make isn’t going to matter. . . . Where I’m going to live isn’t going to matter. It’s the people I impact.” Irene appropriately voiced the students’ newly gained confidence about their future as she stated, “God is there and his hand is in everything.”

The students’ life-changing experiences inspired them and they recognized if they would continue studying scriptures and sincerely sought God in all things, he would help them and direct their paths in life. God’s word offered the students salvation and hope for their future, not only throughout their earthly lives but also eternally. Their heightened awareness of God at this point has offered additional evidence of the link between spirituality, faith, and experiential learning. Their personal applications of scriptures connected them spiritually to God, which strengthened their faith and trust in God’s divine intervention for their lives. Students reflected on what they learned and applied it to their past, present, and future lives. Thayer’s (1996) dimensions of spirituality would

connect their experiential learning to her Faith Quest and Vision scales. Based on Gibson's (2004) indicators for maturing spirituality, as the students internalized and used biblical principles to guide their lives, they experienced some spiritual growth. Fowler (1981) placed emphasis on connecting to God through scriptures as an important element in faith development. These findings also supported previous research findings, which showed college students tend to perceive or measure their level of spiritual maturity by their personal efforts in seeking and following God's will for their lives (Birkholz, 1994).

Triangulation with teacher findings. During his interview, Dr. Chambers commented he expected and wanted students to "wrestle" with what they were learning, knowing it probably would lead them to having more questions about their lives at the end of the term than when they first began the course. Based on the students' written work, Ms. Tudor confirmed students' accounts about contemplating their futures and how they were seeking answers to such questions as, "Who am I now?" She also read in many of the students' assignments about how the Word of God had "opened their eyes," which was a repeated declaration from students throughout their interviews.

Dr. Chambers pointed out he made many connections between God as a loving parent and learning how to be a good earthly parent. He told the students during the term, "To learn to be a good parent, you have to learn how to be a good child of God." This provided validation for the students' stories about how they saw the Bible as an indispensable guide for the future roles in life, which included their roles as wives, and how they planned to integrate scriptures into their children's lives some day. Dr. Chambers made a point to mention he always challenged the students to think about their

futures in spiritual and eternal terms and not only in terms of such areas as career promotions. This validated the students' stories about changed program majors as a way to integrate their faith and learning purposefully as well as their increased confidence in God's help and direction throughout life.

Cognitive Dissonance: An Unconsidered Theoretical Connection

While reading, organizing, and coding the findings related to the students' positive changes in attitudes, behaviors, and relationships, the concept of cognitive dissonance came to mind. This theoretical perspective was unconsidered prior to the analysis of the collected data and was not included in the guiding conceptual framework for this study. Because it emerged from the findings of this study, it is worth consideration as a divergent and potentially applicable theory to examine the students' spiritual and faith development during the semester, which according to Gibson's (2004) spiritual maturity model has a connection to moral development.

Cognitive Dissonance and the Learning Process

Cognitive dissonance is an uncomfortable psychological state brought on when by an incompatibility between attitudes or between attitudes and behaviors (Festinger, 1957). When individuals experience cognitive dissonance, they tend to find ways to reduce the discomfort and maintain a positive sense of self. As such, individuals may change their attitudes or behaviors to relieve their psychological distress; they may also rationalize away the discrepancy to relieve their psychological distress and remain status quo.

Montell (2001) suggested the motivation to reduce cognitive dissonance was especially strong when it involved fundamental beliefs about individuals' self-concepts and worldviews because worldviews tends to have "an imagined perception of an assured tomorrow" (p. 124).

Burns (2006) suggested cognitive dissonance was "a powerful and apparently crucial part of the learning process. . . . and essential to generate dissonance in order to stimulate learning. . . . [and] think critically about the subject" (p. 5, 7). He proposed there could be dissonance generated in religious studies, motivating the "learner to alleviate it in some way; the more important the concepts challenged the greater the dissonance" (p. 3) and as dissonance intensified, so would the motivation to reduce it. He also proposed when learners in religious studies found themselves in situations exposing inconsistencies between their beliefs and their behaviors, they would experience strong dissonance, possibly because they were not "practicing what they preach" but still wanted to continue thinking "of themselves as morally consistent" (p. 4). The results of this study has shown the students experiences during the Old Testament class greatly expanded their Christian worldview and led them to making some positive changes in their lives. As an alternative explanation, perhaps the students experienced some cognitive dissonance, or in Christian spiritual terms known as conviction by the Holy Spirit, because they internalized scriptures. They were motivated to relieve the uncomfortable psychological state, which led them to pursue positive changes in their lives. Such a discovery would not be surprising to Christians because they believe

spirituality is foundational for living a Christian life and it takes the Holy Spirit living within them to help them positively transform their lives (Johnson, 1989).

Triangulation with teacher results. Dr. Chambers acknowledged some students during the course might have felt a “twinge of guilt for ever putting God in a box.” From his years of experience in teaching the Old Testament course, he also acknowledged he expected students to “wrestle” with the encounter they have with God through the scriptures. From the Christian perspective, the terms wrestle and twinge of guilt could relate to experiencing cognitive dissonance, brought on through the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

Grades and Induced Compliance

Burns (2006) also suggested because grades could serve as an incentive, students might perceive a level of induced compliance, a closely related concept to cognitive dissonance, and may have temporarily altered their beliefs with the goal of earning a good grade. He also posited the student most influenced by the content of the religious studies might indeed be one who viewed the “subject matter itself as important [and] who does not have intense attachment to a high G.P.A.” (p. 6).

The results of this study supported the research discussed in the literature review, which suggested students would indeed perceive the Bible course as an opportunity for spiritual development rather than merely academic exercises or busy work to earn a grade. Although I noted grades as a possible demand characteristic and a potential study limitation, the results of this study provided persuasive evidence this was not the case. Students overwhelmingly perceived the class as having made important contributions to

their lives as Christians, and not something they had to endure as a degree requirement for a passing grade. For instance, when Dori first began the Old Testament course, she noted her sole motivation was to earn an A for the course. By the end of the semester, Dori desired to “get the meaning of what she [was] learning about.” Dori stated her faith had “gotten a lot stronger” and she intended to walk more by faith while seeking God’s will for life. For Arlene, she remembered starting the class believing she would be bored and have to suffer through it because she needed the grade. She stated, “It’s really a lot more than that. I mean, it affects people in different ways. It’s given me more insight into things and helped me internalize different values in my life.” Barbara appropriately voiced the overall effect the course had on her and her classmates when she stated, “Seriously, this class has been the purpose of my maturation and my walk with God during the semester.”

Implications for Social Change

During the first decade of the 21st century, college students have reported having heightened religious interests and a yearning to grow spiritually (Perez, 2006). Student enrollment at faith-based institutions has increased nearly three-fold over non-sectarian institutions (Marler & Hadaway, 2002; NCES, 2004). Students enrolled in faith-based evangelical Christian liberal arts colleges and universities have found a unique facet to their educational curriculum, in that all undergraduate students, regardless of their program majors, have to complete required biblical study credit hours before the institution grants them a baccalaureate degree (CCCU, 2010). Required Bible curriculum was a motivating factor behind why I explored the lived experiences of students enrolled

in the Old Testament History course at MBU, an evangelical Christian liberal arts university.

Evangelical Christian institutions have mission statements and core purposes, pointing to holistically developing their students, spiritually and intellectually, while also recognizing their graduates live and work in culturally diverse environments (MBU, 2010). If Christian institutions hope to achieve such aspirations, it is important for them to know how and in what ways required Bible courses help fulfill their missions by contributing to the spiritual development of their students (Moran, 2004). While researchers have provided a small but growing body of knowledge addressing college students' interest in and perceptions of spirituality, the majority of data reported have been generated from surveys (Gallup & Johnson, 2003; Perez, 2006). The results of this study added to the body of empirical data on spirituality by gathering what appears to be the first-of-its-kind phenomenological evidence from the lived experiences of college students enrolled in a required Bible course at an evangelical Christian university, which also established the overarching significance of this study.

The results of this study have provided tangible examples of positive social change at the individual student level, which trickled down into family systems and other interpersonal relationships. There are also positive social change implications for Christian colleges and universities. At the institutional level, the positive outcomes of this study has provided Christian university administrators and teachers some insight and knowledge as to the value of requiring Bible courses for all undergraduate students, which could inform course evaluations for effectiveness and guide future curriculum

development to better meets the needs of students. This could have positive rippling effects, which actually started bearing out before the completion of this study. As with all interviews, I emailed Dr. Chambers a copy of his transcript for data validation. He emailed me back to validate the content, but also to comment about how my study raised his awareness as to needed changes he should make for the course (see Appendix L).

There are also additional tangible trickle down outcomes for institutions. For instance, researchers have shown when freshman students saw themselves as having a spiritual fit within a Christian institution they reported experiencing an overall positive first-year college experience (Morris et al., 2004). The results of this study supported such findings, as students reported how their experiences in the Old Testament course as well as the overall influence of the Christian environment affirmed their decisions to attend MBU and beliefs they were where they were supposed to be.

Morris et al. (2004) found as freshman students sensed having a spiritual-fit with an institution it helped predict the retention of those who would return to the same college for their sophomore year. If the mission of a Christian university is to provide a spiritual and intellectual environment, promoting growth and preparing their students for a meaningful, personal, and professional life, then spiritual-fit and retention to graduation becomes vitally important issues at the institutional level.

Student retention also has the potential to effect university-wide positive social change. Students enter a university with their own personal attributes, dispositions, goals, and commitment. As such, the longer students remain at a university, they not only undergo changes in such personal characteristics due to their own maturation and

personal experiences in the environment, they also have the potential of effecting positive institutional change due to their ongoing interactions with the educational and social fabric of the institution (Tinto, 1993). This type of symbiotic relationship allows the institution to fulfill its mission while keeping it strong and solvent; it encourages positive and timely innovations within the institution, builds committed alumni with a stronger desire to give back, and provides a positive transformative experience for students.

At the individual student level, the positive outcomes of this study indicated the requirement to study the Bible in an evangelical Christian academic setting provided transformative experiences for college students. Students' lived experiences engendered positive and tangible social change outcomes for their lives, which included having a stronger faith in and feeling spiritually closer to God, making changes in their attitudes and lifestyles, developing closer relationships with family and friends, discovering meaning and purpose in their lives, and having hope and direction for their futures in spite of life's unknowns. These tangible outcomes seem reasonable because, from the evangelical Christian perspective, the study of scripture reveals life's truths and serves as a conduit to knowing God and his ways as well as knowing oneself (Duff, 2003; Wanak, 2004). The students in this study experienced a classroom setting that encouraged communal learning, which broadened their worldviews by exposing them to new perspectives and experiences. Their experiences generated self-examination and critical reflection on their previously held values and beliefs. The students personally connected with biblical truths and contemplated what it meant to have meaning and purpose in their lives. They appreciated having the opportunity to contemplate different views and

perspectives because it helped them sort through and identify their own values and beliefs.

Grimmitt (1994) and Parks (1991) suggested one's spiritual values lay the foundation for the pursuit of having meaning and purpose in life, valuing human relationships, having expectations for a just society, adopting ethical standards, and assuming moral responsibility. As such, students graduating from Christian colleges and universities with strong faith and spiritual values along with broadened worldviews have great potential to effect positive social change throughout their personal and professional lives.

Limitations of Results

This study took place at an evangelical Christian institution and all students participating in the interviews declared they belonged to the Christian faith. The students in this study linked spirituality to having a personal relationship with the Lord and believed studying the Old Testament helped them grow in faith and spiritually closer to God. Spiritual-building experiences vary greatly among non-Christian religions, which limit the generalization and applicability of the current findings.

Recommendations for Action

As college students have reported they have a deep yearning to grow spiritually and enrollment in faith-based colleges and universities continues to grow at a higher rate than at secular institutions, the results of this study provide timely and valuable data for Christian administrators and faculty (CCCU, 2009, 2010; NCES, 2004). The spiritual development of students is particularly relevant to evangelical Christian liberal arts

institutions because it is at the heart of their mission statements and core purposes (CCCU). The typical undergraduate student of the 21st century now takes up to 6 years to complete a baccalaureate degree, often attending more than one institution by the time they graduate. As such, they spend a great deal of time within an educational environment and encounter countless experiences from which they learn and grow. As evangelical Christian liberal arts institutions require students to take a certain number of credit hours in biblical studies before graduation, regardless of programs of study, the results of this study provide insight into how students perceive having to take required Bible courses and how or in what ways studying scripture in an academic setting affects students' spirituality and faith. This in turn provides useful data for faculty and administrators to evaluate their Bible courses for effectiveness, help inform the development of future curriculum, and meet the expectations and needs of their students.

Target Audiences and the Dissemination of Findings

I will present a summary of the study results to the administration of MBU, including the board of trustees, student participants, and the professor teaching the course. For the larger audience of MBU faculty and staff, I will present the findings during a faculty-staff in-service day, which occurs each fall and spring term, allowing enough time for questions and discussion on their interpretations of the findings. Finally, the university website will host a summary of findings, giving access to everyone tied to the university as well as the public at large.

As this study should be of interest to other faith-based colleges and universities, I will submit a summary of findings to the CCCU (2010), which has international

membership, for possible inclusion on its website or publication in its journal. Finally, I will seek publication in appropriate scholarly journals because spirituality is a phenomenon of interest across various fields of study and professions.

Recommendations for Further Study

While researchers have revealed a small but growing body of knowledge addressing college students' interest in and perceptions of spirituality, to date, the majority of data reported have been generated from surveys and not from lived experiences of the students (Gallup & Johnson, 2003; Perez, 2006). The results of this study added to the small but growing body of empirical data on students' spirituality by gathering what appears to be the first-of-its-kind phenomenological evidence from the lived experiences of college students enrolled in a required Bible course at an evangelical Christian liberal arts university.

The results of this study represented the voices of 13 female students attending MBU. Would regional and cultural influences or specific religion and doctrinal issues yield different results? To answer these variables, additional phenomenological studies of this type should be conducted at other evangelical institutions. The selection criteria for this study restricted the volunteer base to self-declared Christian females who were 18-to-21 years old and enrolled in the same day section of the Old Testament course. Future studies should include a broader representation of students such as males and females, wider ranges in age, and students enrolled in sections taught by different teachers in both day and evening sections of the same course.

Future studies should involve mixed methods, including qualitative data from face-to-face interviews as well as quantitative data using instruments such as the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (Ellison, 1983), which assesses the dimension of spirituality as a subjective state of well-being and the Spiritual Assessment Inventory (Hall & Edwards, 2002), which assesses spiritual maturity. Although the spiritual dimensions represented in Thayer's (1996) Christian Spiritual Participation Profile provided a component of the conceptual framework for this study, her instrument was not actually administered during the current research, but could also be used in future research.

Finally, a personal goal in the near future is to conduct mixed method longitudinal studies at MBU to follow the spiritual development of freshman cohort groups through their senior year and the completion of MBUs required senior capstone course entitled World Citizen. The World Citizen course requires students to integrate what they have learned throughout their coursework and apply it to think critically and ethically from a Christian perspective about various global and multicultural issues.

Personal Reflection

I engaged in this study because I am a Christian professor at MBU, where I teach junior and senior level students. I integrate faith and learning into my curriculum and daily interactions with students because I want to stimulate their minds and their spirits. During the formative stages of this research project, I acknowledged I grounded my faith and perception of spirituality in my personal convictions and belief in the Holy Trinity of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As researcher, I recognized I needed to exercise great caution and self-regulation throughout this project to keep my values and biases

from overriding the voices of the students. As researcher, I also realized while I could not change the lens through which I viewed the world, I could maintain clarity and focus on the lived experiences of the students as long as I stayed close to the data (Wolcott, 1994, 2001). As researcher, I concentrated on letting the data speak to me rather than me speaking through the data to help assure that my personal meanings, biases, and values did not act as barriers to discovering what spirituality and faith meant to the students. The external auditor on this project also provided sound guidance throughout the project to help assure what I reported and how I interpreted the data truly revealed the essence of the students' experiences.

Has my thinking changed by conducting this study? Although I mentioned earlier in this chapter I plan to conduct longitudinal students on the spiritual development of MBU students, I must confess, this was not my original intent. I initially thought I would conduct the current study to earn my degree and then move onto something else. The students in this study greatly inspired me with their honesty, self-disclosures of human failings, and their simple but profound way they opened their hearts and spirits to let God speak to them through the scriptures. For instance, Linda's words still resonate in my thoughts.

You can't just open up the Bible and try to take from it what you want to hear. You have to look at what God was saying to his people and then from that God is going to speak to you. You can't make up or seek what you want to find because God is the one that has to reveal stuff to you.

For as far back as I can remember in my childhood, I heard scriptures and Bible stories from my great-grandmother, grandmother, and mother. I memorized scriptures with a passion for Sunday school competitions similarly to children preparing for spelling

bees. Students such as Linda helped me realize I have been guilty at times of making decisions or choosing a path I wanted to take in life and then using scriptures as justification rather than a road map. Now, not speaking as the researcher, I want to learn more from the lives of our students because I will learn more about myself in the process.

Conclusions

Students' spirituality became but one component of their overall Christian development during the semester. Their stories provided testimony to how learning and reflecting on scriptures affected their lives, spiritually as well as in other ways.

From the learning perspective, the students' eye-opening experiences directly related to them transforming their experiences into knowledge by combining their concrete experiences with Kolb's (1984) reflective abstract observation along with purposeful personal meaning making to know God, grow in their faith, and mature spiritually. The students' lived experiences during the semester connected to Gibson's (2004) levels of spiritual maturity and Thayer's (1996) Religious Experience, Faith Quest, Vision, and New Life scales, which she derived from Kolb's (1984) learning theory, as well as Fowler's dimensions for faith development. Throughout their Old Testament course, students studied, reflected on, listened for God's messages to them, and then personally connected their revelations to their past, present, and future.

The students in this study inextricably linked spirituality and faith. They studied God's word, spent time with him in prayer, started entrusting their present and future lives to God, internalized values, experienced lifestyle and relationship changes, and by sharing God's word with others, they allowed the Holy Spirit to work through them.

Before taking the course, students tended to let fear of punishment from parents and God serve as their moral compass. Students reported experiencing a change in their motivation to honor the 10 Commandments and were currently motivated out of a sincere desire to live a stronger Christian life pleasing to God. The students' faith and spirituality matured during the semester because they learned, internalized, and applied the Word of God to their everyday lives.

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APPENDIX A:

STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FORM
Researcher Use Only

Dissertation Title: "Exploring Spirituality in Christian Higher Education: How Does Studying the Old Testament in a Required Bible Course at a Liberal Arts Evangelical Christian University Affect Students' Spiritual Lives?"

Name (to be obliterated later):

Assigned Alias:

Date and Time of Interview:

Place of Interview:

Questions:

1. In thinking about the past 3 1/2 months, how has this Bible course affected your life...if at all?

2. Are there any _____ that particularly stand out for you?

a. in-class experiences

b. homework assignments

c. extra-curricular or co-curricular activities during the semester

--potential follow-up...

When you were participating in _____ activity, did you find yourself making connections with any of your experiences in the Bible class? If so, how or in what ways?

3. How has your _____ been influenced by taking this Bible course?

a. theology

b. interest in reading and studying scripture

c. interpersonal relationships with others

d. health behaviors

e. thoughts about your future

f. thoughts about meaning and purpose in your life

g. prayer life

h. worship

i. spirituality

Notes:

APPENDIX B:

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

What is your age in years and months? _____

Circle your race/ethnicity:

- White
- Black or African American
- Asian
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Hispanic
- Two or more races

What is your Christian religious/denominational affiliation? _____

Please list any religious activities that you participate in on/off campus such as Bible study, chapel, church services, etc.

Have you already taken the New Testament History course? Yes No

Circle your current college level Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior

What is your declared Major? _____ Minor _____

Are you a transfer student? Yes No

Are you currently living in the dorms? Yes No

APPENDIX C:

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ALIGNMENT

Fowler's Dimensions of Faith	Finding Meaning and Purpose in Life	Perceived Spirituality	Life-Changing Experiences	Sources of Authority	Values Beliefs
Gibson's Spiritual Maturity Levels	Level 1 Avoids punishment/gain rewards	Level 2 Commandments are source of authority	Level 3 Guided by internalized principles and values	Level 4 Acts on internalized values for God's kingdom	
Kolb's Experiential Learning	(CE) Concrete Experiences	(RO) Reflective Observation	(AC) Abstract Conceptualization	(AE) Active Experimentation	
Thayer's 4 Spirituality Scales (based on Kolb's Work)	Religious Experience Scale Grasping Concrete Experiences as presence of God through prayer worship and confession	Faith Quest Scale Reflecting on the meaning of experiences to discover God's will through meditation	Vision Scale Thinking about one's life and needed changes through study of scripture	New Life Scale Transforming new knowledge into action through fellowship evangelism and service	

APPENDIX D:

AUDIT TRAIL AND PROCESS NOTES

- Week 12 of Fall 2008 semester, presented overview of study to class
- Received 25 returned sealed envelopes with the enclosed letter of interest
- After shuffling sealed envelopes to randomize order began calling and emailing the interested students to arrange face-to-face meetings. As I opened the envelopes I made two stacks—those with a Yes and those with a No. I had 15 Yes, 10 No.
- Established appointment dates for the first 10 interviews, had contacted 11 students. One never responded to emails or phone messages.
- Conducted student interviews in reserved library room
- Began transcribing all student interview recordings as they occurred
- Began emailing transcripts to each participant
- To assure data saturation contacted the remaining 4 interested students to arrange face-to-face meetings. All four students arranged a meeting time. One student forgot appointment twice and never rescheduled. Conducted the final three interviews.
- After transcribing the Professor's transcript, I put it away so his overall impressions of the students in the class and his goals for the course did not interfere with my focus in uncovering meaningful statements, categories, and themes that emerged from the students' interviews.
- Throughout December and January participants emailed me back to validate their transcripts.
- All but one student followed through with validation. No students made any corrections or offered additional comment. The professor and his teaching assistant validated their transcripts. The professor made no changes or clarifications but made some personal comments about the course and some changes he is thinking about due to this project. The teaching assistant offered no additions or clarifications but noted one correction in the use of words transcribed.
- Provided external auditor with copies of student transcripts (anonymous) and study another copy of proposal. Will give a copy of the Professor's interview to auditor once data from student interviews have been processed.
- Read student transcripts thoroughly 3 times, making notations, underscoring, highlighting significant statements. During the third read-through of each transcript, I listened to student's audio recording at the same time for tone, inflection, emotional, etc.
- Assigned participants with fictitious name by accessing a "baby-naming" website and selecting names that did not appear on the class roster. Working through the alphabet, the first fictitious name chosen started with the letter A, the second

name with the letter B, and so on until 13 alias had been chosen. Participants' real names were obliterated.

- Created electronic note cards in Excel spreadsheets for placing extracted meaningful statements from each transcripts. Each electronic note card was labeled with the participants' fictitious names.
- After printing and cut out all electronic note cards, I began organizing statements.
 - First time statements were organized according to questions asked and overall general statements
 - Second time by like categories, which were
 - Their future
 - Meaning and purpose
 - Meaningful stories or scriptures to the students
 - Prayer life
 - Growing boldness in talking about the Bible with friends and family
 - Studying and learning about the scriptures as source of personal strength
 - Connections they made with what they were learning and other areas of their lives
 - Faith development
 - Their view of being a Christian and their Christian walk
 - Freshman experience and being away from home
 - Relationships with family and friends
 - Spiritual growth
 - Their worship
 - Internalizing beliefs
 - Changes in lifestyle, behaviors, attitudes, relationships
 - Integration of faith and learning at MBU
 - General comments about the class and Dr. Chambers
 - Third time grouping categories that may go together to create main themes to combine the following:
 - Meaning and Purpose
 - Thoughts about their future
 - God is Real. He is the creator. He is a Personal God, Faithful, and he forgives (Personalization of a faithful forgiving God)
 - Personal Strength and the Freshman Experience
 - Their personal view of Christianity and their development as Christians during the semester:
 - Prayer
 - Faith development
 - Spiritual growth
 - Worship

- Validating and/or developing new beliefs and internalizing them
 - Scriptures and lessons learned bringing them personal strength
 - Witnessing and sharing their faith/God's word
 - Meaningful scriptures and/or stories during the term
 - Connections they made with what they were learning with other areas of their lives
 - Life-changing experiences during their study of the Bible
 - Attitude changes
 - Behavioral changes/lifestyle changes
 - Relationship changes
 - Christian environment and the Integration of Faith and Learning
 - Overall Comments about the course and it's value and Dr. Chambers
- Met with external auditor on June 5 to discuss progress and provide him with copies of the first draft of categories, electronic 3x5 copies of extracted meaningful statements that supported categories, process notes, and to review Lincoln & Guba's suggested Audit Trail Classification process.
 - External auditor independently reviewed my initial categories with supporting documentation provided and compared his findings from student transcripts with mine.
 - Telephone conference with external auditor on June 10. Auditor stated that he agreed with my initial categories, supporting meaningful statements. Based on his review of all transcripts and his identification of meaningful statements, the auditor stated that he did not see any meaningful statements missing from my documentation.
 - Based on telephone conference with external auditor, I funneled initial categories into the following major domains.
 - A. Transitioning into College Away From Home
 - B. Christian-Focused Learning Environment
 - C. Life's Meaning and Purpose
 - D. Life Changes
 - E. Personal Development as a Christian
 - F. Their Future
 - Met briefly with external auditor on July 6 to review the above list of categories or domains. The external auditor agreed the categories represented the students' lived experiences during the course and offered no further suggestions for changes at this time.
 - Electronically copied all of the meaningful statements belonging to each of the categories into a Word document, organized by six categories and their themes.
 - Emailed copy of teacher's transcript to external auditor. I read and analyzed the teacher's transcript.

- Met with external auditor September 4 to compare and discuss findings from the teacher's interview.
 - External auditor and I had complete agreement on the meaningful statements discovered in the transcript and how they provided triangulation with the student's findings
- During month of October worked on making appropriate changes to first three chapters
- November began working on the first sections of chapter 4 but work and family issues kept getting in the way.
- January 2010 resumed working on chapter 4. As I began writing the results section, it became clear to me that I should fold Life's Meaning and Purpose, initially a separate domain, into the domain dealing with the students' personal development as Christian.
- February I discussed this change with my external auditor and he agreed with the logic.
- The finally agreed upon domains are: (a) Christian Spiritual Development, (b) Life and Relationship Changes, (c) The Christian-Focused Learning Environment, (d) Transitioning into College Away From Home, (e) Thoughts on the Future.
- Worked off and on January through April on chapter 4 because of work and family demands
- After completing first draft of the majority of chapter 4, I used same process described above and extracted meaningful statements from teacher interview and organized them into 4 domains.
 - This data was easier to work with because it was only one interview.
 - Early May met with external auditor to have him review the data I extracted from the teacher interview and its organization into 5 domains. The auditor called me 2 days later and agreed the 5 domains were appropriate for the data.
 1. Course Goals and Learning Objectives
 2. Requiring the Students to Take the Course
 3. Curriculum
 4. The Relevance of God's Word: Applying What They Learned
 5. Observations of Spiritual Growth and Development
- By early June finished writing chapter 4 and posted chapters 1-4 for my chair.
- Stroke and death of mother put any substantive work on chapter 5 on hold until September 2010.
- September and October work on chapter 5 completed.
- Oct 19, 2010, draft of chapters 1-5 sent to chair, external auditor, and proofreader.
- November and December edited manuscript based on feedback from reviews and form and style.

APPENDIX E:

THOUGHTS AND IMPRESSIONS

While Extracting and Organizing Meaningful Statements From Student Data

- Bible course seems to be a source of strength for freshman students/transition into college (freshman experience)
- Course/scriptures seem to help students to contemplate their beliefs and internalize them—not just what their parents or others believe.
- The Bible became more real to students—not just ‘stories’ they remember hearing as a child or through Veggie Tales—real life stories to them now—the stories are not just ‘stories’
- An ongoing threads from students:
 - God’s faithfulness throughout the OT resonated with students
 - is that they have realized just how forgiving God really is; it’s shown over and over again in the Bible. The Bible “greats” failed/sinned but if they repented then God forgave them...they know it’s for them as well—which in turn has instilled HOPE for their future
 - The class has been “eye opening” and students are searching more
 - Threads of “we need a Savior” or a derivative is common
 - The course “plants seeds”
- Students have had some life-changing experiences during the course that have led to behavioral changes, attitude changes, relationship changes
 - The OT is replete with relationship issues
 - Didn’t consider this when designing study--It appears their studies and increased knowledge of God’s word may have created some cognitive dissonance (Christians call this “feeling condemned, which is from the Holy Spirit; psychology refers to this as Cognitive Dissonance)
- Dr. Chambers is well liked by the students. His teaching style, Bible knowledge and his “transparency” with his personal life helps students to be more open to the scriptures and what they reveal to them. They like that he helps them apply scriptures to their own lives. Students appear to appreciate the faith of teachers.
- Students specifically talked about processing the lessons about David, which gives great evidence for link between spirituality and learning theory
- Are there any “discrepant” findings? Keep asking!!
 - Continued to remain open and alert for negative cases.
 - Found no disconfirming or contradictory cases
 - Closest thing to it was 2 students believing course should not be required but they still valued course and do not resent taking it
- Participants came across as very genuine and honest in their disclosures
- Students’ faith development during the semester was closely tied to learning about just how faithful God was throughout the Old Testament.

APPENDIX F:

CLASSROOM RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Good morning class. My name is Janet Puls. Although I work full time at Missouri Baptist University in administration and as a part-time teacher, I am here today as a doctoral student in a PhD psychology program with Walden University. I appreciate Dr. Chambers giving me a few minutes to tell you about my research project.

I am preparing to conduct research for my dissertation and I would like to interview some of the students in this class. The purpose of my study is to describe how or in what ways studying the Bible in a required course at a liberal arts Christian university affects students' lives.

If you become a participant in this study I will meet privately with you for a one-on-one interview. During the interview, I will ask some open-ended questions about your experiences during the Bible course and how or in what ways your experiences may have affected your life during the semester. Your interview will last approximately one hour.

I guarantee that everything shared during the interviews will be kept confidential and I will be the only one who will have access to any identifiable data. Once the interviews are over, each participant will be given an alias, or fake name, to assure protection of your privacy. Your real name will never be used.

Besides being enrolled in this class, my other selection criteria include being a female, 18-22 years old, and considering yourself as being of the Christian faith.

I would like to stress that participation in this study is absolutely voluntary and if you should agree to participate and then decide to withdraw later, there will be no penalty whatsoever. Your decision either way will not affect your grade for the course. Your teacher will not even know who has or has not taken part in this study. Your decision will not affect how you will be treated as a student at the university, now or in the future.

I am going to pass out a Letter of Invitation to all of you females in class, inviting you to meet with me privately so that I can go into more detail about my research and answer specific questions that you may have before you decide if you want to participate or not.

Please take your time reading the invitation letter. Respond to the items at the bottom of the letter, seal it in the envelope provided, and return it to me. Once I have the responses to the invitation letter, I will randomly select students from the "Yes" responses to contact and arrange a convenient time to meet individually to further discuss my study and whether or not you would like to participate.

Thank you

APPENDIX G:

LETTER OF INVITATION

Dear Potential Female Participant:

I just presented a brief introduction about my research study to your class. My study will look at how or in what ways studying the Old Testament Bible in college may affect the lives of students.

I would like to meet with you personally to talk more about my study to see if you would like to take part in it. During our meeting you will learn about how I will collect my data and keep it confidential. You will have time to ask any questions you have before you make your decision. Remember, you volunteer if you want to be in the study. If you choose to be in the study you can still leave the study at any time.

Please respond to the following items. When you are finished, place this letter in the envelope provided. Seal the envelope and return it to me.

Thank you,

Janet K. Puls
Researcher

_____ YES I am female and 18-22 years old. I consider myself to be of the Christian faith and would be willing to meet with you to learn more about your study.

If Yes, please provide:

_____ (printed name)

_____ (phone number with area code)

_____ (email address printed clearly)

_____ NO I am not interested in helping you with your study.

APPENDIX H:

STUDENT INFORMED CONSENT

Thank you for accepting my invitation to meet with me and talk more about my study. You were selected to take part in this study because you are a student in the Old Testament History class at Missouri Baptist University. Please read all of the information on this form. You may ask me questions before you decide if you want to be part of the study.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to describe how or in what ways studying the Bible in a required course at a liberal arts Christian university affects students' lives.

Who is conducting the study?

Mrs. Janet Puls will conduct the research study. She is a doctoral student at Walden University. Mrs. Puls also works full-time at Missouri Baptist University in administration and part-time teaching roles.

What will you be asked to do?

You will spend about 2 hours total at the end of the semester if you take part in this study.

- You will be asked to meet with the researcher for a face-to-face interview to talk about your experiences in the Bible class. The interview will last about 1 hour.
- Just before the interview begins you will be asked to fill out a one-page form. The form will ask you to tell such things as your age, race or ethnicity, and major in college. You will not put your name on this form.
- During the interview you will be asked to answer some open-ended questions about your experiences and how they may have affected your life during the semester.
- Your interview will be voice recorded. The researcher will type up your interview word-for-word. You will be asked to read your typed interview so you can make sure it is correct. If you find any errors, you can make corrections. If you would like to include any explanations you may add those also. This will take you about 1 more hour of your time.

Do you have to take part in this study?

You volunteer for this study. It is your choice. Your decision either way will not affect your grade for the course. Your decision will not affect how you will be treated as a student at the university, now or in the future. If you decide to be part of the study and want to drop out later, you may leave the study at any time. There will be no penalties if you leave the study.

Will any harm come to you if you are part of this study?

This study does not have a lot of risk for you. You will not be physically harmed if you take part in the study. There is a chance you will experience some stronger emotions during the interview. This could make you feel stressed or uncomfortable. If this happens and you would like to talk to a counselor, I would be happy to refer you to one. You may refuse to answer any questions you think are too personal or stressful. You may also end your participation at any time.

Will you be paid for being in this study? Will you gain anything by participating?

You will not receive any money, gifts, or extra credit. During the interview you will be thinking about your personal experiences and how they may have affected your life during the semester. This may be of some value to you.

Who will know what I said during the interview?

Everything you say during the interview will be kept private and confidential. No one other than you and the researcher will be able to match up your name with what you said. Your real name will never be told to others. It will never be used in any written reports of the study. When research data is stored on a computer or on disks they will need a password to open. The researcher will be the only one who will know the password. Your audio recording and any paper copies of data or forms will be locked in a safe.

Who can answer your questions?

The researcher's name is Mrs. Janet Puls. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may call the researcher at 314-488-9924 or email at jpuls001@waldenu.edu. You may also contact the researcher's advisor, Dr. Stephanie Cawthon, by emailing her at stephanie.cawthon@waldenu.edu. If you have any questions about what your rights are in this study, you may call Leilani Endicott, who is the director of Walden's research center. Her number is 1-800-925-3368, extension 1210. The researcher will give you a signed copy of this form.

What do you do next if you want to participate in the study?

I have read the information on this form. My questions for now were answered. I am at least 18 years old. By signing this form I agree to participate in this study.

Printed Name of Participant _____

Signature of Participant _____

Signature of Researcher _____

Date _____

APPENDIX I:

RESEARCHER CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Purpose of Project

The purpose of this study is to describe how or in what ways studying the Bible in a required course at a liberal arts Christian university affects students' lives.

I acknowledge it is very important to protect participants from any potential harm. During the course of my activities in collecting, analyzing, and authoring findings, I will be the only one to have access to any identifiable data collected during this study. Your real name will never be used.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement I acknowledge and agree:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including peers, friends, family or the teacher of this course.
2. I will not in any way reveal, copy, release, sell, loan, alter, or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.
3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant's name is not used.
4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modifications, or purging of confidential information.
5. I will abide by this agreement after the conclusion of this research project.
6. If I violate any part of this agreement, it will have legal implications.

By signing this document, I acknowledge I have read the agreement and verify I will comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Printed Name of Researcher _____

Signature of Researcher _____

Date _____

APPENDIX J:

TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FORM
Researcher Use Only

Dissertation Title: “Exploring Spirituality in Christian Higher Education: How Does Studying the Old Testament in a Required Bible Course at a Liberal Arts Evangelical Christian University Affect Students’ Spiritual Lives?”

Date and Time of Interview:

Place of Interview:

Questions:

1. What did you hope to achieve with your students this semester? (goals/objectives of course)

2. From your interaction with all the students throughout the semester, what activities such as homework assignments or in-class discussions do you believe influenced your students spiritual lives this semester? The most? The least?

Notes:

APPENDIX K:

SYLLABUS

Instructor: Dr. Andy Chambers, Vice President for Student Development,
Associate Professor of Bible
Marie Tudor, Classroom Manager

Division: Humanities

Term: Fall 2008

Location: Recital Hall of the Chapel/Fine Arts Building

Section: DMA MWF 9:00-10:00 a.m.

RBIB 113: Old Testament History

Texts:

The Bible. New International Version (recommended translation) Bill T. Arnold and Bryan E. Beyer.

Encountering the Old Testament, 2nd Edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2008.

Various articles as distributed during the semester.

Course Description:

A survey of the Old Testament in historical sequence with attention given to the most significant events in the experience of the people of God, from the beginning to the close of the Old Testament. The non-narrative literature, including poetry, wisdom, prophets, and apocalypse, is also studied in historical perspective. Attention is given to the distinctive character of each type of literature. This course meets part of the bachelor's degree requirement in Humanities and is a prerequisite to all upper division religion courses. No prerequisites. Three credit hours.

Objectives:

The student is introduced to the Old Testament from a historical perspective and will know the basic time line of Old Testament history.

Our goal here is to grasp the big picture of what happened in the Old Testament from the time of creation, through Israel's formation as a nation and settlement in Palestine, the theocracy, the monarchy, the exile, and the restoration to their land, ending with the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls.

The student is introduced to the Old Testament from a literary perspective and will be able to recognize and interpret the various kinds of literature in the Old Testament.

Our goal here is to get introduced to the basic types of literature in the Old Testament including the Pentateuch, the historical books, wisdom literature, and prophecy and the way each should be read for comprehension.

The student is introduced to the Old Testament from a theological perspective and will be able to integrate the major themes of the Old Testament into their overall reading approach, especially as it prepares the reader for the New Testament.

Our goal here is that, as we learn the story and survey the literature of the Old Testament, we also get introduced to the basic themes and overall message of the Old Testament.

The student is introduced to the basic content of the Old Testament so that the student knows where things are.

Recognizing that there is far too much in the Old Testament to cover comprehensively in a three hour class, our goal here is to survey representative portions of the Old Testament so you will be able to read the rest of it on your own with greater comprehension.

Historical Scope:

From the creation narratives, through the patriarchs, the Exodus, the conquest of the Promised Land, the theocracy under judges, the monarchy, the Babylonian captivity, and the rebuilding of the temple and of the walls of Jerusalem during the second temple period (i.e. primeval history, era of formation, era of theocracy, era of monarchy, era of restoration).

Content, Scope and Sequence:

We will be working through the Old Testament canonically and historically for the most part (except when we cover the prophets).

Important Dates:

Tentative test dates: T1 = W 9/10, T2 = F 10/3, T3 = F 11/7, T4 = W 12/10 10:00 a.m.

O.T. Class will not meet on M 9/1, F 10/17, M 10/20, W 11/26, F 11/28

Important Note on Textbook:

Arnold and Beyer's *Encountering the Old Testament* is designed to both complement and supplement the classroom presentations. As you read you will encounter a more in depth coverage of what we cover in class plus information and ideas we do not have time to go over.

Also, the chapters in the text book covering Bible books will deal with O.T. books we do not have time to introduce in a three hour class. So, there will be some test material from the text book chapters on Bible books not introduced in class (particularly in Unit #4 on the Prophets). The text book is very important. About 10% of the test questions will come directly from it.

Reading Assignments:

For each test you are accountable for the following material in Arnold and Beyer.

Test #1: chs. 1-6 Background, Genesis—Exodus

Test #2: chs. 7-12 Leviticus—Ruth

Test #3: chs. 13-18, 21, 22 1 Samuel—Esther,

Possible extra credit quiz during unit #4 over Psalms & Proverbs

Test#4: chs. 24-28, 32-34 Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the Minor Prophets

Evaluation and Grading:

Reading projects in four parts to be assigned during units 1-4. See Appendix B for more information. 20 points each. 80 points total.

Project 1 due: F 9/12

Project 2 due: M 10/6

Project 3 due: M 11/10

Project 4 due: W 12/3

Participation. Minus 3 points per hour missed. Minus 1 point per tardy (i.e. after the attendance taker stops scanning. Attendance is taken with a scanner, so bring your ID card each day. After week 1, no one will be counted present without their ID card. If you miss a class for any reason (e.g. school or personal), you need to make up the 3 points which will be subtracted from your overall total. My attendance policy varies somewhat from other professors due to the size of the class. The amount of general emails from coaches and professors asking that a list of students be excused is numerous, therefore I consider all absences excused, but you need to make up the points for the missed day. Make up options will be posted on Blackboard. Making up points for missed days is optional, if your grade is safe from being harmed by an occasional missed class. If you are on track to miss more than 30% of class sessions you are at risk of failing the class. If this trend develops, you need to speak with Marie immediately.

Tests. Four 100 point tests = 400 points total. We may flex on the test dates somewhat, depending on how we are doing. You need to purchase 4 Scantron sheets from the bookstore. Bring at least two #2 pencils with good erasers to class on test days.

Hint for tests: Everything I say in class is fair game for tests. The text book is fair game. If I write something on the board (whether information or a Scripture reference), it is almost a guarantee for the test. Do not say, after a test, that you didn't know "that" was going to be on it. Even the study guides are not totally comprehensive. Everything is fair game. See Study Guides for more help on tests. Each Test is over the unit just covered. For the most part Test #4 is only going to cover unit #4. However, there may be an essay question at the end of Test #4 that could be considered comprehensive in the sense that it asks you to review the whole semester for some big picture lessons you have learned about the Old Testament from the class.

Warning: If anyone is caught cheating on any test or assignment, you will fail that test or assignment and possibly the course. More action from the institution is possible. Extra credit projects. Up to 40 points max. No extra credit will be given beyond 40 points.

Tentative Grade Scale:

480-432 = A or 100%-90%

335-288 = D or 69%-60%

431-384 = B or 89%-80%
 383-336 = C or 79%-70%

287-0 = F or 59%-0%

APPENDIX A: EXTRA CREDIT

If you need to make up points for any reason (i.e. absence due to school event, low test score) or you are just a glutton for punishment, you may elect to do extra credit assignments. 40 points maximum can be earned.

Here are a few options:

One page summaries of excerpts from the Old Testament: See Marie for assignments.

This year I am assigning Exodus and 2 Kings to students wanting to do O.T. summaries for extra credit (worth approx. ½ to 1 point per O.T. chapter depending on quality).

At the back of assigned chapters in Arnold and Beyer answer "Study Questions" (you can earn as much as ½ to 1 point per question).

You may do reading projects on other portions of the Old Testament. Make your selection and see Marie before beginning. Up to 2 points for solid commentary on each chapter.

Memorize and recite any of the following Bible verses to Marie: Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:1-6; 20:7; Proverbs 3:5-6; 3:11-12; Isaiah 40:29-31; Jeremiah 29:13 (1 point per verse).

You may choose to do any combination of the above, but no more than 40 total extra credit points may be earned. No extra credit work will be accepted after Monday 12/8 at 4:30 p.m.

APPENDIX B: Reading Project

Value: 80 Points in four 20 point parts.

Read and summarize the assigned passages. The purpose of this assignment is to become introduced to the basic contents of representative Old Testament literature. Good work will contain several sentences of personal commentary per chapter of the Bible.

Read each portion of Scripture first in order to present the overall picture. Do not get bogged down in details as you write so that you miss the forest for the trees. Second, if the material raises questions or prompts personal reflection and responses, include them too. I am interested not just in you reading the Bible but in hearing what it says to you.

The Old Testament readings for each paper are as follows:

Paper 1: Genesis; due: F 9/12

Paper 2: Joshua 1-8, and chapter 24; Judges 1-8, 17-20; due: M 10/6

Paper 3: 2 Samuel; due: M 11/10

Paper 4: Isaiah 1-7, Jonah and Psalm 63, 139; due: W 12/3

Checklist for papers:

I have graders read all papers carefully, so please do your own work. If the paper is hard to do, please see Marie and we will help you. We would rather take the time to work with you than you risk the judgment of God for cheating while writing on a portion of His Holy Word.

Your papers will be graded for organization, neatness, accuracy, spelling, and thoroughness.

NOTE: All work must be submitted through Blackboard SafeAssign. Assignments are listed and may be submitted through the Assignments Tab in Blackboard. Papers should be written using standard MLA style and should include a heading that states your name, date, and assignment title in the top left-hand corner. To learn more about SafeAssign, visit <http://www.safeassign.com> Office 2007 is not supported by SafeAssign.

APPENDIX C: STUDY GUIDES FOR TESTS: Guides for individual tests forthcoming. What follows applies to all tests.

For all tests:

Bring at least two #2 pencils with good erasers (i.e. that do not smear).

Bring a Scantron sheet (available at the bookstore). Consider buying all four at once. The Scantron portion of tests will contain: matching, True/False, multiple choice questions. The written portion of tests will contain lists, fill in the blank, short answer, essay and map type questions.

All material in the lectures, all Scripture passages covered in class, and all assigned chapters in the textbook are fair game for the test.

If an O.T. passage was mentioned in the lectures, I wrote the reference on the board, so you should have it in your notes and should be familiar with its basic content for the tests. 85% will come straight from the lecture notes. 15% will come from directly from Arnold and Beyer.

For every Old Testament book introduced you should know the following if it is given in class for that book: name, author, purpose, key characters and why. Be familiar with the specific events discussed relative the Bible passages covered in class (esp. key verses). Remember, if I write a Bible reference on the board or ask you to write it down, you should review that passage and be familiar enough with it to answer questions about it.

The study guides below are not necessarily comprehensive. They are just what they are called, “guides” to studying. More will be on the test than appears on these guides. For Arnold and Beyer focus on the chapters assigned in that unit. There will be 10-12 questions directly from the textbook on each test. Questions from the textbook will only be Scantron type (i.e. Matching, T/F, Multiple Choice), no essays or lists from the textbook will appear on the test.

RBIB 113: Study Guide for Test #1 Genesis—Exodus (A.B. chs. 1-6)

For Genesis know:

Unique characteristics

The emphasis of Genesis

First Essay: 3 theories of origins (and four variations on the third) 14 pts.

The six creation days per the lectures (Genesis 1)

Five characteristics of man in creation (Genesis 2)

Five warning signs of temptation (Genesis 3)

The impact (3:7-24) and consequences of sin (Genesis 4-11)

The beginnings of Salvation’s Story: God’s Covenant with Abraham

What a covenant is, God's promises to Abraham, how Abraham was to understand it, the four main O.T. covenants.

Second Essay: There will be a short essay question as follows, "How does the message of Genesis 1-11 prepare the reader for the rest of the message of the Old Testament?" This is the one where you consider how God made a good creation that was ruined by sin, and how at the end of Genesis, the human race had been given two chances and blown it twice and needed a savior. From Genesis 12 onward the Old Testament tells the story of how God started the process of being salvation beginning with His call to Abraham. I want to hear your own thinking about how you see Genesis 1-11 doing this.

For Exodus know these lists:

Purpose

What the plagues were about (i.e. the battle of the gods versus God)

Know the ten commandments

Know the functions of the law

RBIB 113: Study Guide for Test #2 Leviticus—Judges (A.B. chs. 7-12)

Test #2 will be similar to Test #1 in format. There will be matching, T/F, multiple choice, list, short answer, and essay questions.

Read through each of the passages we surveyed in class. Being familiar with their content is important, but I will not require you to know the reference (i.e. chapter and verse numbers), unless I say so in class. Both content and the reference number for Deut. 6:4-5 and Lev.

19:18 should be known, because of their central importance to the Old Testament.

Know the key dates: From the year of the conquest of Canaan in 1405 B.C. to the end of the Theocracy in 1050 B.C.

Be familiar with all lecture content for all OT books covered in Unit #2.

Read Arnold and Beyer chapters 7-12. 10% of points from textbook.

For Leviticus: purpose, the significance of the words holy/holiness, atonement, clean/unclean.

Possible lists to look for:

For Deuteronomy know the purpose for writing, four keys to reaching the next generation, and 5 things the Lord asks of us today.

Be able to name the five eras of Old Testament history and a Bible book associated with each.

Be able to name the key word for each Old Testament book for which one was given and describe in a short statement why that key word represents the main theme of the book (e.g. Joshua – victory through obedience to God, Judges - defeat because of disobedience to God ... etc.).

Be able to list the purposes of each book we surveyed.

Know who the main characters of each book are and why.

Know what the keys were to Joshua's success in Joshua 1:5-8

Be able to define theocracy as it relates to the book of Judges.

Test #2 Essays:

From the book of Judges describe God's pattern for reviving His people when they go astray (i.e. the cycle). 9 statements starting with, "God is on mission to a lost world."

Discuss the meaning of three ancient concepts of history (linear, cyclical, and the Old

Testament's covenantal view). How did the Old Testament view differ from the other views?

Study Guide for Test #3

1 Samuel – Esther (A.B. chs. 13-18)

Refer to the general study guide in the syllabus for general help on my tests.

Refer to the relevant sections on the timeline for the historical material for unit three.

Be able to identify the purpose and recognize the parts of the outlines for each book.

Be able to list the key word (and why) given in class for the books covered (1 Samuel—Esther). (16 pts.)

Know about the three offices in Israel during the monarchy (priest, king, prophet)

From 1 Samuel be able to list King Saul's character flaws and King David's character strengths.

From 2 Samuel know the provisions of the Davidic covenant.

Know the main dates from the beginning of the Monarchy through the Captivity and the Era of Restoration (esp 1050, 1010, 970, 930, 722, 606, 597, 586, 536, 516, 444 B.C.) These all will appear on Scantron questions.

For 1 Kings know Solomon's four career achievements and one major failure. Also, know something about how and why Israel broke up into two nations and the significance of Elijah and Elisha.

For 2 Kings know the three reasons why the Jews were conquered and deported and the three separate dates of deportation.

For 1—2 Chronicles know the key to revival when Israel was under discipline (4 things we must do, three things God will do in response in 2 Chronicles 7:13-14.

There are no lists or essays from the handout on Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, but be familiar with the information on the handout. It will appear on the Scantron questions.

Essay: There is only one essay on test #3, but it is big (15 pts.) Name all five eras of O.T. history. After each era, give a one sentence description of the main subject of this period.

After that, give a one sentence of your own personal assessment of the significance of each era for the overall story/message of the Old Testament. Come to the test prepared in advance for this one, so you can write it quickly and then focus on other parts of the test.

RBIB 113: Study Guide for Test #4 The Prophets (A.B. chs. 24-28, 32-34)

The following bulleted list mentions some topics we covered, which may be asked about in Scantron or fill in the blank questions:

- Three offices in Israel

- Three Hebrew terms for prophet

- Definition and role of the prophet

- Characteristics of prophets

- The problem with false prophets

- Distinguishing between major and minor prophets

- Rules for interpreting prophets.

- Know the map (Scantron)

- Know the political situation of the world in the time of the prophets.

- Prophets discussed: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Obadiah.

- Arnold and Beyer chs. 24-28, 32-34

- Some Possible Lists (not necessarily an exhaustive list of lists):

From Jeremiah 31:29-37: What is the New Covenant? 4 pts.

The Day of the Lord – What is it? What is its promise and its warning for the Jews? 6 pts.

Name the four major prophets. (Ex. Credit: Name the 12 minor prophets)

Know the rules for interpreting the prophets.

Two guidelines for distinguishing true from false prophets.

Two Essays (these are guarantees):

The religious situation of the Jews during the time of the prophets (both Northern and Southern kingdoms). Name some examples of kings from both the NK and SK who illustrate the religious situation during the time of the prophets. What did the prophets try to do to help? How were they generally received? 8 pts.

Using the outline I gave in class write an essay that summarizes the message of Isaiah. 8 pts.

Possible Extra Credit Essay:

Identify and discuss three big picture lessons you have learned from your study of the Old Testament that you can take with you from this class. Feel free to draw on Scripture, lectures, textbook...etc. as you articulate your ideas. 6 points possible.

APPENDIX L:

TEACHER TRANSCRIPT VALIDATION EMAIL

From: Andy Chambers
Sent: Friday, January 16, 2009 2:56 PM
To: Janet Puls
Subject: RE: transcription of our interview for your approval

Janet,

I read this right away and agreed with its content. I just wish I was doing more to provide patterns of evidence of actual spiritual transformation in the class. Since it is a college class, I assess it the college way, with tests. But there needs to be more with the study of the Bible. I think there are going to be some changes to my approach in the future, so I can actually observe specific moral, spiritual and other commitments students make (or decide they don't want to make) as a result of this class.

Thanks, Andy

Dr. Andy Chambers
Vice President for Student Development,
Associate Professor of Bible,
Missouri Baptist University, St. Louis

APPENDIX M

TEACHER TRANSCRIPT

Date: December 15

Location: Dr. Chambers' office at MBU

RESEARCHER: All right—just a real broad question to get us going. What did you hope to achieve with the students this semester—thinking about your goals and objectives—the real nitty gritty the goals and objectives of the course?

PROFESSOR: A couple ideas Janet. One is to give them an overview of the Old Testament knowing that most of them have had very little exposure to the content of the Bible—many have attending church most of their lives but have never studied it from a historical perspective or even to understand its theology. So, to give them a basic overview of the Bible was something I thought is very important in college—especially on a Christian college, religious college, with the Christian faith as sort of the corner of our program. And then the second goal is a little harder to articulate on paper; but because of our, because of our identity as a evangelical Christian university, we very much believe umm that God, the God we worship and confess through Christ as teachers uh we greatly desire for our students to come into an encounter with Him through His Word. So, I seek the opportunity for students to encounter the Gospel from the Old Testament and from the New, but to encounter it in such a way that students with little-to-no background at all can be engaged by it, wrestle with it, not feel like they're being, they're having it rammed down their throats, which sometimes people have that stereotype of religious people...but to present the story and believe in the God, who gave the story, enough that He can bring it to their hearts as we teach it.

RESEARCHER: Amen

PROFESSOR: So, those are the two big ideas for me when I teach it.

RESEARCHER: Okay. You have some stated goals-objectives in a syllabus, right?

PROFESSOR: yes.

RESEARCHER: So, I probably would like to have an updated copy of what you used for this fall. I know [omitted TA's name] you sent me a syllabus once before but if I can have a copy of the one used this fall, that would be great.

TEACHING ASSISTANT (TA): uh huh

RESEARCHER: Anything you would like to add to that [to TA]?

TEACHING ASSISTANT: Well, I think since I don't necessarily do the teaching in the class, my goals are along the same line but a little different, in that I want to help show the students, ummm, grace through their assignments because I'm mostly with the students when they do their homework, their attendance, ummm, and helping them figure out what the assignment is. And one of our assignments that we do is that we have them journal through the Bible; they just have to summarize different passages; and something that we talk about a lot is ummm in referencing something that he said in not wanting to ram it down their throats, is that we don't grade based on 'what' they say about the Bible but that they are actually interacting with the Bible. So, they can read it and say, "I

completely disagree with this. This is what I believe.” But, as long as they are telling us what’s happening here and what they critically think about it then they’ll get the grade based on that—not that they’re repeating what we say. ummm But then I also get the chance to show grace through students who are struggling in class—just helping them go back and say, “you know you may not deserve to get a second chance to do this, but I don’t deserve a second chance, but God has given me one, so let me give you one.”

RESEARCHER: okay.

TEACHING ASSISTANT: So, getting to meet with the students that way.

RESEARCHER: okay; right. ummm You help with Bible study sessions, like preparing for a test and things like that?

TEACHING ASSISTANT: Study sessions before the test, yes.

PROFESSOR: Baseball

TEACHING ASSISTANT: Yes, we play baseball. [LAUGHTER EXCHANGED] It’s actually a thing that I took from another professor. Uh, I create questions straight out of the lecture notes uh and I take his lecture notes and take the study guide and ummm then I create different questions on varying levels of hardness—singles, doubles, or homeruns—and then I separate the students into two different groups and on their teams and then they get to come up and play baseball; and they get to choose single, double, or homerun. They uh...I have life lines to help them out. They can talk with the people on the field to help them...

RESEARCHER: okay

TEACHING ASSISTANT: get the answers or in the life lines they can ask one of their teammates with their notes; they can ask a teammate without their notes, or ask the whole team. What I find that it encourages is that, they get extra credit points yes, but, then they start ummm, and I guess this is another one of my goals, is they start critically thinking through their answers; it’s not just rote memorization. But if they know one answer I try to help them see how they can take that answer and jump to another answer if they will just stop and think about it. ummm And so they don’t realize they are learning, while they get these points, and while they ummm and while they’re playing this game. But, ummm, their test averages are higher than the other students.

RESEARCHER: those on the team?

TEACHING ASSISTANT: oh, I’m sorry. Their test averages are higher than the class as a whole.

RESEARCHER: okay. What percentage of the class attends this study group, would you say?

TEACHING ASSISTANT: mmmm, I would say between a half and 2/3.

RESEARCHER: okay. That’s actually significant.

PROFESSOR: It surprises me.

TEACHING ASSISTANT: In a class of 90 ummm I varied, I started with about 30 students but my last unit average between 45 and 55.

RESEARCHER: That’s actually, I think, impressive that, that many come.

PROFESSOR: Well, we should probably should clarify or try to articulate the shared role we have. The president several years ago saw that the, I guess, challenge that I faced. I have an administrative job; ummm, but the school wanted me to teach this recital hall

kind of class and so he said, you need help, and uh Marie was finishing her work on her master's in Christian Ministry and I've known her for a long time and I knew that it would be very little effort for us to sync on how to do this. And the main thing that I wanted her to provide was just exactly what she said when she says 'grace' I think a personal touch in having, for a lack of a better word, a senior administrator. You know, I'm often not available like I think a teacher ought to be; and I try my best to convey that to the students that that's why [TA] has this very important role so that they won't feel slighted if they can't talk to the professor. I tell them, she has this content inside and out and she has a bachelor and masters in the subject—talking to her is as good as talking to me.

RESEARCHER: uh hum

PROFESSOR: But then she brings the physical presence to it—that they need.

RESEARCHER: uh hum uh hum

PROFESSOR: There's times when I'm the good cop and she's the bad cop and there's times when we reverse that role.

RESEARCHER: uh hum uh hum Especially with this being most often their first, especially the fall semester, their first experience in college—to know they have that extra resource.

TEACHING ASSISTANT: uh hum

RESEARCHER: During those study sessions, do they ever start talking about uh how applicable to their own lives? Or a struggle they have been going through and how this class has helped them deal with an issue in their lives?

TEACHING ASSISTANT: No.

[LAUGHTER EXCHANGED]

PROFESSOR: It's too rowdy.

TEACHING ASSISTANT: I actually got told once...well, when there's that many students it's hard to do that type of thing anyway. But I actually got told once to kiss the theory, keep it simple sweetie.

PROFESSOR: okay

TEACHING ASSISTANT: ummm, because this is a student that I have one of those kind of antagonistic relationships with; ummm and he and I talked about that later, but, ummm, there are so many students and for some reason even though my questions are hard than his are, because on the test, it's multiple choice, it's matching; it's true-false; it's essay.

RESEARCHER: right

TEACHING ASSISTANT: All of mine are fill in the blank or give the answer.

PROFESSOR: And they bring their notes.

TEACHING ASSISTANT: And they can bring their notes and their taking notes. They seem to think that I have all the answers. And so they tend to write down...I found this out...they write down my questions faithfully. They'll type them out word-for-word and then pass around copies of what I would say.

[LAUGHTER EXCHANGED]

TEACHING ASSISTANT: But I would say was exactly what he said but in a different form. But they seem to think they are going to get all of the test answers from me. So,

PROFESSOR: and that's okay if they think that too—they're learning

TEACHING ASSISTANT: they're learning, but

RESEARCHER: well sure

TEACHING ASSISTANT: but they're so busy trying to make sure they get the answers, that they really don't ask those questions.

RESEARCHER: okay

TEACHING ASSISTANT: ummm.

PROFESSOR: Mrs. Puls raises a good point, a good question. There's a lot context where we know we are never going to hear about application, I believe you used that word; but I should state either as a third overall goal or maybe a sub-goal of the encounter with the God of this Bible that we greatly, I would say desperately, want students to see the relevance of the Word of God to their daily personal lives.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: I mean, that is so critically important that, that if I didn't think that I had a shot at doing that, I wouldn't teach. I don't have time. You know what I'm saying...

RESEARCHER: uh hum uh huh

PROFESSOR: there's just too much going on in my life to want to do this—except for the fact that I believe with all of my heart that God wants to take this ancient book and He wants to make it land squarely on their hearts...

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: He wants this ancient book to bring healing their hurts, their wounds and bring vision and clarity to their ambition; and I just think He wants to, it, when I was in college, I don't know why God picked that time in my life; but in my freshman year, and it may just be in the realm of developmental stage of faith where I'm coming an adult at the same time, but the Bible began to speak very directly to me. It went from being a message that I heard at church or in Sunday school or from my mom and dad, to a message to where literally it felt as if God was taken the words and leap and they were leaping off the page into my life...

RESEARCHER: Uh huh uh huh

PROFESSOR: and everything changed. My life was turned upside down by that. So coming to the classroom with this just, just, longing to see that happen; and there's times that I have to wrestle with getting the right balance because I read the teacher evaluations, and I read them carefully, to try to learn and understand. We've been kind of leaning, we've been leaning on the academics right now and thinking about pedagogy and stuff, but probably a more pervasive concern is one that we're so used to thinking about that we probably don't realize, or we probably should say up front, that's really the heart of it. And we find out in interesting ways what God appears to be doing in people's lives; and it's almost never those contexts.

RESEARCHER and TEACHING ASSISTANT: uh huh

PROFESSOR: Often, it's looking at their faces. It's looking at their faces, and I see some guys or girls, you can just see the weight of their sin is on them and their just wrestling with their need for mercy. Others, I look at different points in the lectures where I know different issues are being touched on, I see pain. I see wounds that are being touch on. I see, you know, guys that have used girls; I know that girls have had abortions and other

struggles in their hearts and they're dealing with, you know, big wounds in their hearts. A lot of these kids, their parents are broken up and they're trying to figure it out—why should they honor a dad or a mom that's been AWOL on them, you know. So, sometimes it's just through seeing the faces in the classroom that you know that there's stuff going on beyond the test grades.

RESEARCHER: uh hum Thinking about the students in this particular semester then...can you recall any of those times...any particular lecture you were doing, a particular story in the Bible, or an activity that stand out for you in having an effect on the students' spiritual lives.

PROFESSOR: Yes. There's, there's one. Towards the end of the semester, I try to tell the story in a very methodical way. I try to support a plot throughout the Old Testament so that they can walk with me through the journey. And I believe that is very faithful to the narrative structure of the Old Testament; I think it is a story, a historical story, but a story nonetheless. When I get the Jeremiah lecture and went through Jeremiah, I don't remember the day it was, and this is going to get into the subjective, and as a researcher you're going to have to sort this out Janet. I felt such a weight of conviction in the class and in the heart, and it was because Jeremiah was making it so plain that the entire lesson of the Old Testament was, we are not able to keep the law. God is a just God and he is righteous when he judges and that we deserve judgment and I, I try to stress to them, don't go to the Gospel just yet; don't go to the New Covenant just yet...you need to sit with Jeremiah and just grapple with the reality that what you must do, you can't. And, you need someone else's righteousness; you need someone else to keep the covenant of law for you.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: You need a deliverer. And I don't, I don't know how to describe it except for just a feeling, but it was a weight of grace and judgment. I felt it in my heart; I felt it in the class; I felt it in the faces of the students. And it's usually later in the semester before I see that happen. Now, some kids' hearts are getting hard and angry at the very same time. I know that happens and I'm okay with that. The same word, God is glorified in His justice when His Word hardens. He's glorified in His judgment, just as He is in His grace when it is magnified. So, I see kids getting mad and blowing me off, and on that day, I saw tears on several faces.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: I saw people with, you know, tears in their eyes, because they, it was finally for the first time instead of a 25-minute sermon that ends with a quick invitation, they had heard several months of a story of a faithful God and an unfaithful people.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: And they finally got to the end of it and realized—this is about me.

RESEARCHER: uh huh You mentioned needing a deliverer...what would you consider then, if you had to put it into a phrase...what is the, is that the ongoing message and theme throughout the entire semester?

PROFESSOR: That is the old covenant's teaching guideline, objective. Uh, Gal. 3:24 really is the New Testament's teaching objective for the Old Testament: "The Law has

become our tutor to lead us to Christ that we may be justified by faith.” The Law being the entire old covenant, not just the books of Moses,

RESEARCHER: right

PROFESSOR: and I believe Paul was stating very clearly to a Gentile audience, to the Galatian people, not to a Jewish synagogue, but to a Gentile group. You need to read the Old Testament so that you will be led to see your need for Christ and you, then you can be put right with God by faith and not by works of the law.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

TEACHING ASSISTANT: I would say just, I think that some of them are starting to see that too, ummm, because as I’m grading their essays and their tests or grading their homework ummm, even when they don’t necessarily know the answer, and you can tell when a student knows the answer and when they’re trying to give what they’ve heard the entire time, hoping they’ll get that right.

PROFESSOR: right, right

TEACHING ASSISTANT: A lot of the students will go back to, ummm, everyone has sinned ummm, God is wrathful

PROFESSOR: absolutely, right

TEACHING ASSISTANT: but at the same time God is forgiving and if I repent then He will forgive but salvation is a gift, something you can’t earn.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

TEACHING ASSISTANT: ummm, and even if they’re actually not getting the questions right, they’re all going back to that same thing where everyone sins; God is forgiving; but their still seeing that balance, or at least they are unconsciously seeing that God is wrathful God but He is a forgiving God at the same time. And even if they don’t know what that means, they’re quoting it.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: Let me “capsulize” that. There’s four ideas that I teach the whole Bible for, and three of them are Old Testament ideas. The first is that, God is a holy God—He’s holy; and the second is, we’re not. And then the third is, the consequent idea is, we need a Savior. And that sums up the Old Testament.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: The New Testament then is-- the Savior has come.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: And so it builds on the first three ideas.

TEACHING ASSISTANT: And, and I do think that they are starting to personalize it more now, ummm. In the beginning of the semester when they’re just giving summaries of the different chapters, you could tell they were very detached, detached from it. They may not necessarily know what’s going on; they’re just trying to summarize. As they’re trying to do their extra-credit work at the end of the semester I offer them more points if they offer beyond summary. If they give me summary they can earn one point but if they give me summary and commentary, and I try to explain to them, summary is what happened and commentary is what you think about it, then they can earn more points.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

TEACHING ASSISTANT: And you can see as they're going on that they're actually applying more to their lives not just, well, I think Joshua walked around the wall and that was kind of weird.

RESEARCHER: right, right

TEACHING ASSISTANT: But they're actually trying to apply it; and they do.

RESEARCHER: right

PROFESSOR: They say that.

TEACHING ASSISTANT: But they are applying it more to their lives and ummm on the final exam Dr. Chambers offered them an extra-credit essay they can write outside of class that they can bring into class and turn it in then. It asks them to identify 3-big-picture lessons they've learned from the Old Testament and how they can apply it their lives and as I read through them you can see the students who only wanted extra credit; they're just writing what they think will give them the points. But there are the select few who really thought about it and the ones who had never thought of the Bible before or they've grown up knowing it, but this class had really affected them because it brought them more into contact with the Word and as they were in more contact with the Word the Lord was just opening their eyes more and more each time they wouldn't have had outside this class.

RESEARCHER: uh huh That's, of course, the area that I'm really interested in.

TEACHING ASSISTANT: yeah

RESEARCHER: So, can you, do you remember some of the examples and things the students actually wrote of how this course has, and delving into the Word this way, has affected their lives.

TEACHING ASSISTANT: yeah...I think the one overarching thing that I heard more, ummm, was the interaction with the actual Bible—having to read it for the four different assignments. uh----And then also during class he would ask them to bring out their Bible, or he would give them scripture that they would have to have known for the test. ummm. That a lot of them, even if they were believers before, ummm, they had really never encountered the Bible one-on-one personally before everyday or for each exam. And, so, getting that chance to not only read for their assignments but for also for extra credit. Or, you know, if they were just reading it personally they had never had something holding them accountable to make sure they were reading it. And then those who had never read the Bible before, uh, but had heard stories, like maybe they had heard the story of Moses,

RESEARCHER: uh huh

TEACHING ASSISTANT: or the walls of Jericho, they really didn't know the context of that story; or, you know, they had heard all these things like, God lets bad things happen to good people, ummm, and I don't understand why—but, they could never ask those questions. As we're going through class and we're actually bring up scriptures as to why certain things happen uh, they're saying, okay, this is not just something someone is telling me, this is something that is real. Uh, I may not believe in God, but, you know, I respect this.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

TEACHING ASSISTANT: ummm And I really don't see in they way that I have in the past a lot belligerent students toward either the course material or the Bible itself. But,

there are students who would say, you know, I don't believe in this; I'm here just for the class, basically.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

TEACHING ASSISTANT: And then there are those who are like, you know, I've never believed this before but, wow, God has really opened my eyes. One student in particular, if it is okay to

RESEARCHER: yeah, yeah, just don't mention students' names.

TEACHING ASSISTANT: right, okay, I won't. She had said in her essay that she hadn't never encountered the Bible before; that she had heard about God and she knew she was a sinner; she really didn't know what they meant. uh But, she knew she did bad things and that uh she could be punished for it—but she really didn't know what they meant until she was in class. And in her essay she was talking about, you know, I never really understood the punishment of sin is death, and, and you burn in hell, is what she said. And she said, I don't want that to happen to me; you know, I want to give glory to God in my life; and I want to be the person He wants me to be. uh And that all came about because she had encountered the scriptures through this class.

RESEARCHER: uh hummm, mmmm

PROFESSOR: Yeah, sometimes because of my Dean of Students' role, sometimes that role I would say even makes it harder to have the pastoral conversations I want to have at times. Sometimes I am having to deal with their behavior outside of class and they're not always happy to see me.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: But that's another reason why having [TA] is really good.

RESEARCHER: uh huh, I can see that.

PROFESSOR: You know, before we had a campus pastor full time, it was even tougher to teach that class and to be the Dean of students and be the sole disciplinarian. But I, I would say that, this may not be helpful to your research because it would have to be anonymous and we wouldn't know if these were your student subjects, but if, if copying anonymously some of those critically thinking personal reflections sessions, sections of tests or essays would be use to you, as maybe a supporting pattern of evidence,

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: but it would not be related to your

RESEARCHER: What might be better is if [TA] just gave me a summary of some of the things.

TEACHING ASSISTANT: okay

PROFESSOR: yeah, because I think she's right; it tends to be the written responses

TEACHING ASSISTANT: uh huh

PROFESSOR: where you see the most identification of applications

RESEARCHER: uh huh, uh huh

TEACHING ASSISTANT: Well, I wonder if part of that is because we don't see their faces when they're talking.

RESEARCHER: mmmm, that could be.

TEACHING ASSISTANT: So they might feel like, I can talk about this

RESEARCHER: could be, most definitely could be

PROFESSOR: Sometimes, because we're in St. Louis, we have a lot Catholic students here,

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: and growing up here I had a bunch of Catholic friends. Well, I love when, and I had this happen last week, when a student, where a student who was catechized in the Catholic faith and all of that, so she has had, you know, all of the religion classes, PSR classes all her life. But, she said, thank you for asking me to read the Bible for myself. She said, my priest, you know, taught me a lot of good things about Christ, but I never knew how to find it in the Bible.

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PROFESSOR: And, I often get that from my Catholic students. Now, here's what I get from my Baptist and evangelical students, this is kind of fun.

RESEARCHER: this is a good comparison... great.

PROFESSOR: Yeah. Well, I've observed this through the years—you know, a couple thousand students. They come back and say, I've heard preaching from the Bible all my life but it's never been connected to the, the, the narrative superstructure, now they don't use that word...

RESEARCHER: uh huh, uh huh

PROFESSOR: but, they don't know how to hook it into the flow of the Bible's history, its internal history--what theologians call salvation history. The German word, ?????, the history of salvation is a very important word in the biblical theology as a discipline. And there is a very clear internal story that tells, that's very doctrinal--

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: it's a narrative. And so the Baptist kids, and the Assemblies or other kids that may come, they may be very schooled in specific truths from specific verses, but it's almost universally out of context—it's not within context. Except for, some of my home school kids who come through and because they've had Sonlight or Abeka or other curriculums that require them to study the history along with the text, some of them come in with that—but that's pretty much only them—and maybe a few Christian High School students.

RESEARCHER: uh huh, uh huh

PROFESSOR: So, it's kind of, you hear that, you hear that enough to recognize that's a pattern, and perhaps a benefit, for different faith traditions.

RESEARCHER: uh huh Faith, thinking of faith and one of my interests, areas of interest, is faith development through this course and what would your perception as far as students' faith development through this course—where they were perhaps at the beginning of the course and where they were at the end of the course?

TEACHING ASSISTANT: I think before I can answer that question is, how do you define faith development, like, objectively? Like, I'm not quite sure how to answer the question beyond what I see from their answers like on the tests and in their papers. I don't know if that is faith development or if that's academic development.

PROFESSOR: She's looking to us to work on that. Here's what I would say.

RESEARCHER: I don't want to put words in your mouth.

PROFESSOR: I have had, and this is, if, if you would permit me to draw on the long history of teaching rather than just this one class—different semesters you see different things. For whatever reason, this fall, there may have been fewer of those, those encounters when you literally see the transition to faith and there are semesters where that happens regularly. The year the Passion of the Christ movie came out...

RESEARCHER: oh yeah.

PROFESSOR: I mean, we had several dozen go see the movie and write a book report on the Luke passion chapters. And, we were stunned in the level of spiritual plowing that was going on.

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PROFESSOR: But I have had students do their journal on 1st John and I'll never forget two journals. One young lady, First John explains the faith

and how to come to it and how to have evidence that you are truly a Christian; and she worked through the paper and the Lord brought her to faith in Christ; and at the end of the paper she said, I now understand I need Jesus Christ to be my Lord and Savior and I want you to know that I am putting my faith in Him—that's how she finished the paper.

RESEARCHER: uh hum, uh hum Well you had said that obviously the string, the thread, that ties it all together in the Old Testament is that we need a Savior anyway; so, that's kind of where you would be coming from. Obviously, the simple definition of faith is, and what students would probably recite back, it's faith in things unseen...right?

PROFESSOR: right

RESEARCHER: ummm so, thinking on that line, with this group of students this term....

TEACHING ASSISTANT: Well, I think I have seen a lot of seeds planted, a lot of students who may not have had questions before but have questions now. I wonder if part of that comes, and even your examples are New Testament examples, ummm, if we spent so much time on the needing the Savior and on, uh, we just got to the deliverer, if there's still, and this is purely subjective. I don't know if this is right or not. But if they, they don't know who that Savior, who that deliverer is, who that Savior is—even though we talk about it—as they're working through it themselves—ok—everyone sins, God is holy; we're not; we can't do it ourselves. What is the answer? I don't if I've spent enough time yet to see that.

PROFESSOR: Well, yeah, the proper response to Old Testament may not necessarily be to confess faith in Christ. To be quite honest, the proper response is despair. When Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit" I believe, He was summing up the law and its implication for right standing before God and I think poor in spirit, bankruptcy, is what the prophets were trying to explain to Israel that she needed to grapple with. So, I really, at the end of the prophet section, wanted to see a sense of despair of making themselves right with God by their own deeds. Because humans, and college students are human, are notorious in thinking they have to earn the favor of God. And, I guess, I feel I have been successful if I by knocking those props out from under them and if I have to leave them hanging hopeless until, until God can open their eyes, then I actually feel like that might be more faithful to the text than to solve their spiritual problems.

RESEARCHER: uh hum uh hum

TEACHING ASSISTANT: Well, then using that as, you know, what they have learned is leading them to despair in their own abilities to put themselves right with God. I have seen several students, ummm, I mean, I may not necessarily know where they started from, but as they're talking in the end and they're saying, you know, this is, I, I came from here ummm but, I have seen several students who have come to the conclusion that they may have at one time thought they could do it themselves but they know now by reading the Bible and through the class that they cannot do it on their own.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

TEACHING ASSISTANT: ummm And, some students thought they had been self-sufficient all along, but now they recognize that salvation cannot be earned. uh Several students, I guess you can see kind of, not necessarily a dark theme, but as they are writing, they recognize their own ummm their own sin whereas they may not have before.

RESEARCHER: Do you think that you could say that somewhere thought this semester at least some of the students began more on a quest?

PROFESSOR: Oh, yeah.

RESEARCHER: Would that be a fair way...

TEACHING ASSISTANT: Oh, yes, some have begun a spiritual quest.

PROFESSOR: I wish I could, I wish it would be appropriate to quantify something that unless we surveyed the class we couldn't quantify; but I, I'm just going to put a number out there, and hopefully it's not preacher embellishment. But I, I would say that in a class of 90 if there were 45 who really have not seriously wrestled with God yet, I would say that at least half of those, and maybe more, were put on the road. They responded positively to the engagement and their spiritual need.

RESEARCHER and TEACHING ASSISTANT: uh huh, uh huh

PROFESSOR: Even the young lady in a discussion last week when I asked her, Okay, what do you see? She said, I see, it was in Isaiah's message, I see that God will not approve of outward religion that is not real, that's not in the heart, from the heart.

TEACHING ASSISTANT: It was Joel.

PROFESSOR: It was Joel, discussing Joel. Return to the Lord with all your heart and with fasting and weeping and mourning. And rend your heart, and not your garmets. I just put it out to the class. I said okay, guys and ladies, what do you see, what is he saying. And she said that, that she articulated what a lot of the students had begun to understand.

TEACHING ASSISTANT: uh huh

PROFESSOR: That being outwardly religious is not necessarily, it isn't anything to God. He looks for true repentance and true faith.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: And she articulated better than I could because she was a fellow student.

RESEARCHER: uh huh That kind of ties to spirituality. ummm Do you need to get that? [interview stopped momentarily]

RESEARCHER: All right, uh, we were talking about quest and you felt like that a good piece of them, are at least searching, you feel they are searching at least. They may not have all the answers; they not even quite understand yet what the ultimate goal is, but they're searching.

TEACHING ASSISTANT: Well, and when you asked when ummm I felt like they had started on this quest that ummm that made me think in Unit 2, so it's about the second month starting into class, we talk about what we call the cycle—Israel makes bad decisions; they get punished; they repent; and then they start all over.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

TEACHING ASSISTANT: I think that's when the students started to internal it. ummm I see this even now that we are two units away, they still went back to the cycle. They talked about how they realized that "I do that".

RESEARCHER: mmmm

TEACHING ASSISTANT: They internalized that they are like Israel. They may not be a country, but they make decisions; they get the consequences; they repent; you know, everything is good; and then they start all over. But I don't if any of them realize that the cycle continues and that God will continue to remain faithful. But, I think, that's when I really noticed that some of them started internalizing it rather than it being that objective that happened to someone else.

RESEARCHER: And that the Old Testament is relevant to their own lives?

PROFESSOR and TEACHING ASSISTANT: Yes, yes.

PROFESSOR: God addresses Israel corporately throughout but then, think about this. In Deut. 8:5 God tells corporate Israel, as a father disciplines his son, so the Lord your God disciplines you. And to learn to be a good parent, you have to learn how to be a good child of God. And, so, that verse, Deut. 8:5 alone, enables me to personalize application all through the fall, the semester. And, I was even thinking about the group that might be interested in dialoging on this, and we have been kind of talking more about the irreligious kids, getting them engaged. But I want also to address another group too that came in hoping, what I think a lot of these students wanted when they came out of a youth group or a church was...I can't wait to sit under a professor, and I hope that they felt this way—maybe its just hubris on my part. But, I want to sit under a PhD in Bible to help me gain more that what I've gotten so far.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: So that, that spiritually engaged student who came to MBU, because it was a Christian university, I, here's where I meet them—literally everyday after class. I'll have one or two with administrative questions, but most of the time they want to bring up some part of the notes and we'll walk back to my office, almost every day I'm never alone, because I'm talking to a student about how God was dealing with them.

RESEARCHER: Can you elaborate on any of that?

PROFESSOR: Yeah, uh, men and women, three. It's, uh, I know you're addressing women, uh, and maybe the boys are more comfortable in talking to me and the girls with [TA], I don't know. But, one guy in particular, for whatever reasons, his religious pilgrimage had really drilled in him a works-righteousness mentality—that he had to do all these things and God, or else, God would not accept him. And he knew better; he had an evangelical heritage—knew better. But he still couldn't shake this feeling that he wasn't pleasing to God. And, he, it finally, and he was in a bit of a spiritual crisis, all the way into October because, you know, and the call to holiness starts coming on you, that's going to make that crisis more intense.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: But as the call to holiness is followed up with a recognition that we can't achieve it and a realization that I've got to turn to God, then the student begins to realize, wait a minute, God wants me to come to Him with my failure to meet His standard. And, I mean, I've had that student; I had another student come out after class to tell me that she had been going through some major struggles in her life and that in the class today that she was reminded that God is sovereign and can be trusted to be faithful to His people; and I didn't know what was going on in her life but I invited her to come by; she didn't; but she was in some tears because of some problems in her family that she had no ability to control.

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PROFESSOR: And we got kids with parents sick, parents AWOL; they're the siblings in charge, so to speak. I find that out. And they got the weight of the world on them. And that little lady blessed my heart because I could just feel that a load had been taken off of her, you know.

RESEARCHER: You mentioned internalized, that you believe they have internalized this for them, for themselves, and what it means to them. Thinking about, did they, have you picked up on anything about how this may have changed their perception about the meaning and purpose in their lives?

PROFESSOR: You can talk...but then I'm going to jump.

TEACHING ASSISTANT: Well, you can go first, because I'm not sure how to answer that.

PROFESSOR: I wait all fall so I can say one thing—I tell these guys—you have no idea what God can do through the people in this room. You've never imagined it; you've never even approached it; you don't have, have, the sli, I try to almost kind of, I try to undermine a little bit, maybe, how do you do that—create irony? I'm not sure what I'm doing when I do that—the rhetoric that I'm employing. But, I try to make them think, I guess I'm not thinking hard enough. But, I try to be forceful in that, in that statement. You don't even have a clue. You don't even, you have never begun to imagine what your life could mean for the Kingdom of God. And that's when I challenge them to being to understand that God is far greater than they have permitted Him to be; He is bigger than they have ever imagined. And that if He is for you and if He is in your life then you need to quite dreaming small dreams. And on that day, I try, if I can, to make them feel a twinge of guilt for ever putting God in a box. And I want them to walk out of class *determined* to find out how big God is so that they might a vision for their lives appropriate to the greatness of God. That's one of those days when I *know* that there is, they, they're stirred by that, because they want a purpose in their lives, bigger than themselves.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: They're desperate for that/

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: They don't want Abercrombie and Fitch or I'm trying to find, I'm trying to find the most shallow things I can imagine

RESEARCHER: Yeah, that's pretty shallow.

PROFESSOR: Yeah, you know, all they've been offered is shallow living as a promise to fill their heart. And I want them to imagine a kingdom that is so great that when John describes it in Revelation, he, he describes it in words that simply bankrupt the human language. It's not that John isn't describing a literal Heaven; it's that what he sees is too much for human language to comprehend.

RESEARCHER: uh huh uh huh

PROFESSOR: And so, I, and towards the end of the class, I try to paint that picture for these kids—to try to understand that the thing that God wants to do through their lives is, is so joyful, and not only that, when we get to Heaven, we will have an ever increasing capacity to experience joy—John Piper—don't have to quote him to, to steal from it.

[LAUGHTER EXCHANGED]

PROFESSOR: Because, you know, some of them have heard of this idea about a god on the clouds with harps and how's that going to be fun. Well, Jesus said, If you are faithful in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter now in the joy of your Master. That verse is not about career promotions; it's a verse about the end of days...

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: and the future, eternal kingdom of God, where He promises joy you can't even fathom. So, I tell these students—you need to quit being satisfied with sex before marriage, with being drunk, with being the most pretty or the most popular or the best athlete, or whatever. If that's your goal—you've sold out.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: You don't have a big enough dream. Okay, I'll shut up.

RESEARCHER: What about from your perspective...have the students indicated that they have been processing thoughts about meaning and purpose in their lives and how perhaps the scriptures have, at least, caused them to question or enlighten them in some way.

TEACHING ASSISTANT: If they are, it's not something that they're necessarily writing about in their essays. With this last essay with the three big pictures, a lot of them focused more on the idea that, I am a sinner in need of a Savior than they really did on the outside issues of what does that mean, other than, I need forgiveness. They really don't talk much about how that affects them.

RESEARCHER: okay. Did any of them, anytime during the semester, changes that they have made in their lives? Behavior changes perhaps?

TEACHING ASSISTANT: Not that I can recall. Ummm

RESEARCHER: health behaviors, uh

TEACHING ASSISTANT: I'm trying to think, ummm. When Dr. Chambers was talking earlier about how a lot of students come up to him and talking to him after class, students who are believers, who are looking for a little bit more in-depth conversation, I really don't get those students very much; I usually gets the ones who need help in the class, uh, or who just have questions specific; but they don't, I don't know if it is because I am that authority figure, they really don't talk much about uh their outside life or how any of this has effect outside of... I think some of them only say what they think I want to hear.

Ummm so, I'm trying to think if I have read that anywhere.

PROFESSOR: I think the line of questioning is making me yearn for a way to maybe assess that more helpfully

TEACHING ASSISTANT: yeah

PROFESSOR: because I'm convinced that not only is it happening, but given the chance, they will articulate what is happening.

TEACHING ASSISTANT: yeah

PROFESSOR: But like [TA] is saying, and it's a huge class, and sometimes you don't always encounter the people with whom God may be doing the most work in their lives.

TEACHING ASSISTANT: right

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: But there's enough evidence from those one-on-one encounters to make me really confident that this is something that God is working to.

TEACHING ASSISTANT: yeah And I think what he was saying earlier about how you can see it on their faces, that's true. And I think sometimes in little things ummm a student I had been working with all semester ummm had, her father had passed away early in the semester, uh, and then, she was struggling with that, and then going through, you know, trying to get her homework caught up, and we were talking more along the lines of just trying to get caught up in class and never really never made it all the way to the very end, wasn't able to; but we were constantly working together just on the homework part, but you could start to see ummm going from sadness to, even at the very end her computer crashed and she lost almost 100 points of extra credit between this class and Collegiate Seminar. And rather than just getting upset about it and getting really frustrated, she came back and thanked me for all of my help, which this is not always the response I get from students—especially when they have external issues that stop them from getting the grade that they want. uh So, it's not really something that I can say I know that she's making different changes, but I, subjectively, feel like this class had great impact on her. I don't know if that helps you or not, but

RESEARCHER: mmmm Do they ever bring prayer requests? Do you pray sometimes?

TEACHING ASSISTANT: I have one student who has asked me for a prayer request, but she also knew me outside of class, so

RESEARCHER: okay

PROFESSOR: Janet, when the class was smaller, when taught 50-60, I could do that. I've never felt comfortable in taking that much class time because it could turn out to be a long session.

RESEARCHER: understandable

PROFESSOR: Do you have access to the teacher evaluations for this class?

RESEARCHER: no

PROFESSOR: Is that something that would be useful to you?

RESEARCHER: It's usually uh, those are usually private and confidential and if you wanted to share them

PROFESSOR: I am happy for you to have them because those are where I find out spiritually where the changes are being made. And, literally, I would very much encourage you to take a look at that; and you have my permission to do that.

RESEARCHER: okay

PROFESSOR: Because, I mean, here's where you'll see the whole gamut; and this will show you how diverse the class is. Ummm For every one criticism, and a criticism will go like this; here's how I can tell that they don't want me to meddle, to say too much in the way of application. They would say, too much preaching for a college course; don't tell so many stories about your, and it's usually my kids, right, my 4 children. [laugh] I had a girl who was student at Parkway South the year before so she new my daughter [omitted name] and I didn't realize this, and was Lacrosse or something, I don't remember what she was. But anyway. I came home from work one night and [daughter] said, Daddy, why were you talking about me in class today? And I said like, What? And she said, so-and-so is in your class and she was texting me today while you were talking about me in class.

RESEARCHER: oh no

PROFESSOR: And we had such a good laugh about that.

TEACHING ASSISTANT: But for every student who doesn't like the stories there's one that actually does; and I wrote this down to talk about at some point. One of the students in his essay has been so impacted by Dr. Chambers' personal stories, that, that's what helped him to realize that this is something that he can apply to himself because of Dr. Chambers. And, and one thing that I appreciate about Dr. Chambers as a professor, is that he doesn't candy coat it; he doesn't make it sound like that he has always made the right decisions. He talks about when he was in college and that he's made bad decisions, or, or longings that he had when he wanted to get married. He makes it very real for the students that they know this is a man who uh is not God himself; he is just a man who has made bad decisions and is saved by the same God that they will be. uh And so there are students who really appreciate them.

PROFESSOR: Can I, this is from last fall's; Can I read this?

RESEARCHER: sure

PROFESSOR: It will be the same as you will hear this spring, excuse me, this fall. Let me give you one or two criticisms. ummm "Course was difficult to understand." "Instructor moved too quickly." "Work was too much." mmmm, gee, I don't see any about being too preachy. I know that that comes up. But here's what I like to hear them say... :I like that Dr. Chambers used this time to reach students both academically and spiritually." "I enjoy his happy spirit and energy he brings to teaching." I guess that means I am a goofball. "I respect his use of scripture and sound teaching instead of mere opinion and all personal thoughts." I appreciate his humility and openness to use his own life stories to demonstrate what he is teaching." "I like how the class is run, how the concepts are presented through the notes and handout." I, I'm not trying to toot my own horn, I'm just trying to say—that's what I want students to say in so far as, and it's only by grace, this is not me—but to whatever degree they see authentic Christianity from the teacher, I want them to be impacted by that, by me, God, through me, through the content.

RESEARCHER: uh huh, uh huh

PROFESSOR: uhhh

RESEARCHER: Well, bringing in your every day life is how we can make things relevant to what students are learning and this being the Old Testament uhhh, the whole

Old Testament, like you said earlier is, God is faithfulness; he was there for the people; they failed; they sinned; He forgave

PROFESSOR: right

RESEARCHER: They were back again; and the whole cycle continues.

PROFESSOR: Exactly. And here's along that line. "Instead of just presenting ancient history, the instructor connected the history to theological concepts relevant to our lives." That's a fairly well linear statement about the idea—history-to-theology-to-application. Ummm, "I also like how we learn things like through stories that he tells and not just a bunch of facts." Ummm, I'm just looking for application statements. Uh, "Dr. Chambers obviously knows the Word and it's evidenced in the class." Uh, "I really enjoyed this class because Dr. Chambers got personal in some of his lectures with the students. I think that he told us what we needed to hear and I appreciate him for that." What I'm trying to point out is, oh, here it is again. "I enjoyed the outlines we followed; it made following the teacher easier." And that's great, but then listen to the personal side. "I also enjoyed the personal applications that he used." Ummm, this is great too. "Course and instruction are favorable. I like this class because it is a life-long learning experience that I've been prepared for."

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PROFESSOR: If I don't see that happening then I feel like I'm failing them

RESEARCHER: uh huh uh huh

PROFESSOR: as an academic instructor in an evangelical school. I want them to walk away with a basic literacy in biblical concepts and I want them to walk away deeply impacted by the relevance of the Bible for their questions, their hopes, their fears, their hurts, their sin, and their recognition of the problem. And so, I look for that. I also look for, I also look for the frustration with the preaching; other words, if I don't get a few criticisms of that then I'm probably not being faithful to the text. Does that make sense?

TEACHING ASSISTANT: Well, I've gotten verbal ones, so I think you are being faithful to the text.

PROFESSOR: that's fine, that's fine. I have seen, and I have said this in conferences where I have talked about the power of the Word of God, and I have seen this too many times to not believe it's true. Same class, same lecture, same teacher, same everything, and I've seen students sitting almost next to each other, and I've seen one heart break over their sin and over the love of God and how, and their need to just turn everything...and I've seen other kids want to spit nails at me in the very same class,

RESEARCHER: uh huh uh huh

PROFESSOR: which tells me that I get no credit when God does a good thing in someone's life. He gets the glory; and I also don't get the blame if the Word makes somebody's neck stiff.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: so...application!

RESEARCHER: One of the areas that I asked students about was uh the 10 Commandments and you talking about of course and the ultimate end we can't live by the law—we can't—we're incapable of doing that. So, I asked the students about what governs, what they believed governed their behavior before they started the class as to

what they believe was helping to govern their behavior now, rather than just look specifically at the law, the 10 Commandments, which even non-Christians know the 10 Commandments because it's out there in movies and that type of stuff. So, I got them thinking about, you know, what they believed was governing their behavior before they started verses now—thinking about the 10 Commandments and the law. So, how would you sum that up?

PROFESSOR: ummm That's a great question—to help them think about moral awareness and moral formation before and after the class, because the class is primarily a case study in the relevance of the law—for a people's lives. And, I believe that God has written the basic principles of this code on their hearts—Romans 2:14-15 tell me that. So I go in there assuming they may not know the Commandments but their hearts ring with the ideas. And, I try to press, just like you said, two things. One, that it is God's will that they follow these principles, because it is for their good and because God is a good God and he wants good things for His people; and I try to make that clear. But then, I also make this clear too, in the session on Joshua 24:14, when Joshua, they settle the land; they renew the covenant at Shechem and Joshua says, “choose for yourselves today whom you will serve”

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: Everybody likes to preach about that verse and use it on Father's Day and whatever that we do that. And then I always like to follow it up in context when the people say, ‘we will serve the Lord’ and Joshua dumps a bucket of ice water on their heads by telling them they were unable. Joshua 24:19, ‘you're not able’ And that's how he sent them in to embrace their inheritance in Canaan—with a stinging rebuke

RESEARCHER: I would say so

PROFESSOR: with a stinging rebuke. And so, here's how I think the law maybe is seen differently. I want them to understand that even after grace has met them, that the law, in terms of how it fleshes out holiness, practically, that it's only the kindness and the mercy and the grace of God that can actually govern our hearts, because it is *only* the love of God that can break the chains of sin.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: The, the warning against judgment is important, but only as a means of driving them to despair over their own works—the means by which they hope God will accept them by. The warnings, when preachers tend to just moralize, they fail the Gospel, because just preaching against sin does not put a heart in a place where the kindness of God, Jeremiah 31:3, is a huge verse in this class ‘I have drawn you with loving kindness.’ Now he says in that chapter, I am going to punish you but only with justice, you know, ‘I'm not going to let you go entirely unpunished’ he even says that.

RESEARCHER: uh huh uh huh

PROFESSOR: The law is still in effect but God, Himself knows, that it is only His mercy that can bend their hearts towards His will. So, I want them to leave the class with a deeper appreciation for the law and a deeper understanding of the means that God uses to move us closer toward obedience....

RESEARCHER: right, right

PROFESSOR: and that is love.

RESEARCHER: Well, following, I mean, we're, to guide, the 10 Commandments are supposed to guide our behavior; we are supposed to honor the 10 Commandments,

PROFESSOR: yes

RESEARCHER: but, the motivation behind why we honor the 10 Commandments is what should change.

PROFESSOR: yes

RESEARCHER: Is that correct?

PROFESSOR: yes, true

RESEARCHER: because when we're younger we don't do something out of fear of the consequences and punishments,

PROFESSOR: yes

RESEARCHER: but when we're older it's more internalized values, right?

TEACHING ASSISTANT and PROFESSOR: Yes,

PROFESSOR: Let's take an example or two. ummm, honoring your parents—I know for a fact, because I was kind of a smartelick when I was that age too there's not a student in this class who hasn't figured out their mom and dad are not perfect. And there are some who have been hurt by their parents, deeply, and they don't know how to honor them.

And we talk about the promise is to you --that you may live long in the land—to the kids.

And so I try to teach them, you just don't honor your parents because you are supposed to, you honor them because it pleases God. And, when you learn to respect authority,

whether they have earned it or not, you are enabled in your own internal spirit to live a longer successful and more prosperous life. The Commandment against adultery—very important they understand this. When they hear a stereotype of the pulpit message on Simpsons or whatever else they get the misrepresentation of it, uh, that comes to mind, they hear the Commandment against adultery as the Commandment, not to have fun.

Okay. And, they have heard that promiscuity is okay—just protect yourself.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: I want to teach them that, and please forgive me I'm in mixed company here, but I just want to tell you—I'm pretty blunt about this in class.

TEACHING ASSISTANT: uh huh

PROFESSOR: God has created us for wildly fulfilling sexual intimacy with another creature—in an exclusive covenant marriage. And I reference Song of Solomon when I say the Commandment about adultery. I say, 'guys it's not erotic poetry, but it's the closest the Bible gets to it because it literally celebrates sexual expression. And I said, 'So, if you think the Bible is prudish, you go read Song of Solomon.

[LAUGHTER EXCHANGED]

PROFESSOR: You know, there's these wrestlers, soccer players, and, and they're like, 'did he just say something that I didn't really, you know

[LAUGHTER EXCHANGED]

TEACHING ASSISTANT: They perk up when he starts talking.

RESEARCHER: I bet they do.

PROFESSOR: Yeah, and on the external-internal issue, I make this point on the coveting Commandment, most of the ancient cultures surrounding Israel have law codes; having a code of ethics is nothing new. The Hammurabi Code in Assyria, is a great set of ethics,

except for one difference. The Hebrew code has a command against coveting; the command against coveting is not an externally kept command. I can walk into church and I can look as clean and zippy and the person next to me in the pew, and my heart can be corroded and cancerously infected with jealousy and coveting. That is a spiritual concept that had to be revealed to Israel. The other cultures, by common grace, [can't make out next phrase], came up with commandments against false witness and stealing—those are bas...you know, what civilization is going to do well if kids dishonor their parents.

RESEARCHER: sure

PROFESSOR: Lost people understand that. But, it's the Bible that describes King Ahab laying on his bed consumed with jealousy because that vineyard belongs to Naboth and he wants it for himself; and his wife, Jezebel, comes in and mocks him for his spineless... I think she says, 'I'll get it; I'll go get it for you.' The Bible teaches us that these moral requirements must be kept internally before they will have any meaning externally.

RESEARCHER: David coveting another man's wife..

PROFESSOR: exactly

TEACHING ASSISTANT: I think those examples ummm are another thing that helped the students ummm take the, these stories and ma...I'm trying, not, not to use the word internalize; what am I trying to say? ummm

PROFESSOR: internalize

TEACHING ASSISTANT: No, it's, it's where they're applying it, they're applying it to their own selves. Is that

RESEARCHER: personal, personal relevance

TEACHING ASSISTANT: Yeah, ummm, it just doesn't tell all the stories about people who are keeping the law, but it's people who are not.

RESEARCHER and PROFESSOR: [laugh]

TEACHING ASSISTANT: One of the students, yeah, and that surprises them, because one of the students ummm talked about in one of their essays that David, 'a man who was after God's own heart', and it says that, you know, 'he made all these mistakes' And then one of the questions on our final exam it's talking about the spiritual, ummm, where the Northern and Southern kingdoms were and they have to give examples of different kings and one king was worshipping the stars and one king was saying that 'my sins are worse than his sins' and

PROFESSOR: bragging about it

TEACHING ASSISTANT: bragging about it. And, and so, these students are seeing that people who are in authority or people who the Bible is talking about, who they may have thought beforehand that the Bible was just all these great people making all these great decisions

RESEARCHER: uh huh

TEACHING ASSISTANT: that if all of these people can make mistakes and God can forgive them, well maybe He can forgive me too. So, they are taking these stories and making them personal to themselves. And, they talk about that in their essays or in their, ummm, when they're reading different things, like the Book of Job, and they're trying to figure out why Job was afflicted...and then they start to wonder about themselves—well,

why am I afflicted with these. They never talk about what they are being afflicted with, ummm, but

RESEARCHER: But you feel like they are searching that

TEACHING ASSISTANT: they are

RESEARCHER: and contemplating that

TEACHING ASSISTANT: Oh, yeah, and they're taking these characters, these people, out of the Bible and they're using them to kind of, I guess to give themselves a compass to say, okay, these people are making bad decisions and being forgiven. Who am I now?

RESEARCHER and PROFESSOR: uh huh, uh huh

PROFESSOR: Janet, let's not forget, I, I want us to, we're on one track right now, but I want to bring up the creation-evolution debate sometime.

RESEARCHER: yeah, I would like to. Uh huh

PROFESSOR: good, okay, good

RESEARCHER: yeah, uh huh, I would like to as well

PROFESSOR: I'm glad that you brought up the Commandments though because that's so far back in the fall that we didn't naturally jump there; but that's a very important point.

RESEARCHER: Well, that, that's one of the areas I'm looking at because that shows the spiritual growth if you, if you start internalizing what is governing your behavior and it's not just you know fear of punishment but because it pleases God, shows development—shows spiritual growth in this.

PROFESSOR: Yes, yes. And I'm assuming, I don't survey them, and maybe I should consider doing that next year.

TEACHING ASSISTANT: yeah

PROFESSOR: But I, I, I know enough about them as 18-19 year olds, that many of them, I believe, have a very shallow, very underdeveloped concept of moral principles that are supposed to form us and how they should go about engaging that process.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: And, I want them to know the will of God for their lives, for the good life God wants for them. I also want them to know the power of the love of God, the mercy of God, to effect change in them and that they can only come through experiencing His grace and forgiveness into that power that enables them naturally to begin to follow His way for them.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

TEACHING ASSISTANT: Well, I think they see that balance even if they don't realize what it means, ummm, because when I do read their essays they're not usually tipped in one direction, it's not usually, and, I mean, there are some who are tipped in one direction or another, but it's not a God who is all wrathful or a God who is all loving.

PROFESSOR: uh huh, uh huh

TEACHING ASSISTANT: They're usually will mention at least a little bit of both, ummm, and you can usually tell by reading it if someone understands what they're saying

RESEARCHER: right

TEACHING ASSISTANT: or if they're just parroting back what we say. But they usually do have that balance.

RESEARCHER: okay. Well, let's do the creation-evolution.

PROFESSOR: Most of the students come in

RESEARCHER: because I know you do the entire book of Genesis, right?

PROFESSOR: [laughs] We try. We try.

TEACHING ASSISTANT: Well, for their assignment.

PROFESSOR: right, yeah, right; they read it.

TEACHING ASSISTANT: Most of the reading is 20 chapters, ummm, either from one book, or several chapters from different books.

RESEARCHER: okay

TEACHING ASSISTANT: However, because Genesis, because there's so much information in that book, ummm, but we can't through the entire book in class. We do have them read all 50 chapters and do,

RESEARCHER: do summaries

TEACHING ASSISTANT: do, summaries

PROFESSOR: yeah

RESEARCHER: I learned that through the interviews.

PROFESSOR: Yeah, and the biographies of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph are wonderful and there may be more learning going on in them than we will ever know.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: because those stories are so powerful. But Genesis 1-11 is absolutely critical for laying a foundation of what God requires and what went wrong. The hinge of the Old Testament is Genesis 12 and I try to make a big deal of that. I say, 'guys, I've only gotten 11 chapters done out of several hundred and we are at the turning point. I and do as much of Abraham as I can get away with simply because the big ideas of the covenant of grace and law—they're all in Abraham's stories, so I can set them up for the rest of the school year with that. But before I can do that, I have to bring the creation-evolution debate put on the table, because a lot of them have had excellent public school educations where they've had good teachers, even religious teachers. But constrained to teach only one approach to origins, and even if they wanted to raise questions about the neo-Darwinian view, they're restricted in what they can say.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: So, I assume they have only heard the case for naturalist evolution or that they have maybe a religious background where they were taught a form of theistic evolution, like Francis Collins, the former head of the Genome Project, his view. So, I try to teach them some options, with, and I try to do it delicately because I don't think they want to feel like some Bible-thumping fundamentalist preacher is coming in there to just smack down their public education.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: Because I want these kids to search with integrity. So, I present naturalist evolution, theistic evolution, and then creation; and then I present several different views on creation--and then--four different views on how to understand the days. And then, I justify this, and I'm not a biologist, but I do have a background in engineering—chemical engineering. So, things like thermodynamics, which is very important to understanding the development of systems from complexity to dispersing or the other direction—processes going one way or the other. That's something I can talk about. So, I take a

whole lecture to raise questions. Half way through that unit, I make clear to them that this is the view I hold. And I hold to a 6-day creation. I believe microevolution within a species makes perfect sense.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: I, I don't, and I'm a layman on this, but I just don't believe that uh macroevolution makes sense. But I try to speak to that has a layman so they understand, guys, this is how I believe. But I even try to say that in such a way that, that, that may convince them that somebody credible doesn't agree with evolution but I don't want to convey it in a way that makes them feel like an idiot.

RESEARCHER: right, right

PROFESSOR: But by the time I get through the end, I have, I have a goal to help them raise serious doubts about their view they have been told is the only scientific way to look at it. And because Intelligent Design is a major movement right now, among molecular biologists and other disciplines, guys like Bill Dempsky and Phil Johnson and others, I, in the recent years, I have added a section in my last lecture on ID so they understand that ID is not creationism; it's, it's a scientific approach to the evidence and where it points. And, and I help them understand, hopefully how to think critically about that, and I try to teach it in a way the trust, hopefully reveals my heart that I trust the Lord, that He is going to take this and make it land where He wills. I, and, I'm trying to help you see how I'm making some assumptions about the class and one is that they are so steeped in one way of thinking that they need some room; they need to hear other ideas, but they need some room to wrestle.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: And, okay, this is kind of secondary, but, I also know that I have some really, really evangelical students that have only heard one way of reading creationism and it may be a very specific approach and they may have had it preached from the pulpit so much so that if there is any variation on creationism, then that person is a heretic or a liberal. And, I don't agree with that. ummm I think that there are a variety of places like on the age of the earth and things like that where orthodox Bible believing inerrantist scholars have different opinions and I want those with an extremely conservative background to grow in their critical awareness of other options within the Christian community, so that they don't do what I often have seen kids do and that's be combative with people they have no business arguing with.

RESEARCHER: right

PROFESSOR: I get both those groups in this class.

RESEARCHER: sure

PROFESSOR: And sometimes, sometimes the defensive, the creationist ones are kids that came out of public schools and they don't, they're, they're shell-shocked, and all they know is a defensive posture.

RESEARCHER: uh huh Well, yeah, in that environment you would almost have to be.

PROFESSOR: Yeah. Others have had what I would call a more fundamentalist training, where they've been told don't even look at other options other than a 6-day view. I try to show respect for that but at the same time I treat creationism, and I consider 4 different ways that evangelicals have approached the days and the age of the earth. And then I tell

them my view. I can't get to the rest of the Bible until I'm able to help them unpack that so that they won't go through the class thinking, well, he's just talking about myths anyway. And, I do something else that kind of pushes back on my creationist kids. I tell them, look guys, the creation-evolution discussion is very interesting and helpful and we need to engage it, but it's not, it's not the point of Genesis 1-11.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: And I hit that like a hammer. Genesis 1-11 is a polemic against the relativistic polytheistic culture surrounding Moses, surrounding the Hebrews, and it is a theological shot across the bow to self-righteous attitudes that say that I can please God in my own strength. And I want them to see that that's why Genesis 1-11 precedes the rest of the Old Testament

RESEARCHER: uh huh The greatest argument against humanistic psychology right now [laughs]

PROFESSOR: Yeah. "In the beginning, God"

RESEARCHER: That's right

PROFESSOR: ...is the most important phrase in the Penitent. I, everything starts with God and that if you define the world in any other way then you are, you started on the wrong foot and you'll never get it right if you don't go back to that.

TEACHING ASSISTANT: And I think he does it very well because I think if you asked 95% of the students, most of them would say—We need a Savior. And that's something that we talk about in class. But I know the creation-evolution debate is very important to the students, not only because that's the day the majority of the students flock to him. If you want to see when the students will go and talk to him the most, it will be that one. But also students will write about it in their essays all the way up to the end of the semester and uh we do also have an extra credit thing that they can do and read articles from each of the different perspectives and then come up with their own conclusions so they can do that type of research in a safe environment where they recognize that no matter what conclusion they come to, they know they have at least researched it. It's not something that they are being forced..

PROFESSOR: right

TEACHING ASSISTANT: but students, ummm, at least two students in their final essay said that that was something that was a big picture that they had never really thought that, the earth had to be created and where did it, and who created it.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

TEACHING ASSISTANT: So, they may not have played it through that that was a paradigm shift

RESEARCHER: right, right

TEACHING ASSISTANT: but

PROFESSOR: I think the point that I'm getting at for your research, and you said it very well, yes, I believe Genesis is history, but it has primarily a theological purpose, which leads to a spiritual application.

RESEARCHER: absolutely. It does and in the foundation of faith.

PROFESSOR: yes

RESEARCHER: Isn't it? I mean, it would have to be the foundation of even faith

PROFESSOR: Yeah, it's rooted in history and that's why I believe that it happened is an important element of its truthfulness. But, but Moses received that word in a culture where the gods were representations of things in the creation and they, the gods were fighting each other; they were capricious, to use [TA] favorite word for today—that's her word for the day. Knowing who was in charge and the upheaval on the Earth was seen as the battles among the gods. And religion was about appeasing, re-manipulating, controlling life by appeasing the gods. And the covenant that God made that started with the doctrine that God made everything is a covenant that basically, it says that God will not be manipulated.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: He loves, but He loves you! And He wants the best for you. He wants to bless you and make you a blessing. But He will only do that when you trust Him. You give, you give Him your life and your cares and your hopes and to and you give it to Him and you say, God your way is best. And so, so, it's a historical account with a theological message that is aimed right at our hearts.

RESEARCHER: Do you think they made any connections this term with all the, the uh, warring around the world and so much of it is based on religious ideology—do you think that they see what they were learning in the Old Testament and what's playing out in the world now?

PROFESSOR: uh

RESEARCHER: sort of history replaying itself

PROFESSOR: Yeah, I try, I try to limit, I try to keep it in the 'then' as much as I can

RESEARCHER: So, it's truly within the historical timeline

TEACHING ASSISTANT: uh huh

PROFESSOR: But, one thing I do say as you read, two things I say. One, I help students see some of these conflicts over real estate are, are ancient. They are older than Western civilization itself. And I make this comment every year. I don't wish the Middle East on any president, democratic or republican; I do not wish that problem on anybody because it is an intractable problem. People with such deep religious beliefs are never going to give up their beliefs.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: And so maybe there's a détente but there really is no solution to the Temple Mound and to Gaza and the Golan Heights and the West Bank—all that stuff is claimed religiously by different peoples.

RESEARCHER: uh huh But I think that is important for them to even note, to think about that.

TEACHING ASSISTANT: And another thing that he does ummm and I know I just interrupted you...but he also points out on the map where ancient names correlate with

TEACHING ASSISTANT and PROFESSOR: modern names

TEACHING ASSISTANT: and they, they may not, they may not think too much into it. I don't know how much I really paid attention to the news when I was 18-19, ummm, but at least they get that idea of, okay, the ancient name of Babylon may not mean anything to me but Iran means something to me.

RESEARCHER: uh huh uh huh

PROFESSOR: Now, that's right. And the second, the second idea is more in the prophets. I try to show them a worldly perspective verses the prophets' perspective; and the worldly perspective was Assyria whipped up on all her neighbors and she was imperialistic in conquering until the bigger fish came along and that's Babylon—she swallowed up Assyria and everybody around her—and then the Medes and the Persians. And I try to show them that from a secular point of view, these are kings, rivals, empires rising and falling and it's all to their own glory.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: And then when I read to them the prophets' perspective you see God saying, 'I raise up nations and I dispose of them as I please' uh, 'I am God and there is no other.' My favorite verse is Isaiah 46:9-11. "I am God; there's no one like me. I make known the end from the beginning. I have said my purpose will stand. I will do what I please." And I teach them to view the clashes between nations in history as, as, as, uh, I teach them to read it light of a theology of history, which begins with and ends with the sovereignty of God and His purpose is fulfilled. For example, Nebuchadnezzar was ambitious so he came over to Judah and brought Daniel and his buddies over and then he conquered and deported ... in the Book of Jeremiah God says clearly---I raised up Nebuchadnezzar and I brought him here. I brought him against my own people. And so that perspective is a way of seeing the nations at war from God's perspective.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: And I also remind them, because I have internationals, who have different feelings about America.

RESEARCHER: sure

PROFESSOR: And I've got Americans who are mid-westerners like me that don't live near borders who maybe have a wrong idea about our permanence. And I try to say to these students that, you know, this country is blessed, but God will dispose of us just as soon as He is done with us and that He does not need the United States of America. I'm as loyal as the next guy to my country and my flag, but I try to hammer them with, with this wrong idea of equating the USA with this somehow permanent and irrevocable blessing of God.

RESEARCHER: A sense of entitlement almost.

PROFESSOR: Yes. Yeah, 'cause I have internationals privately confess to me—you know I have struggled with, and especially in light of the Iraq war, their feelings about it out there. But to many students, sometimes it's—here they go again flexing their muscles.

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PROFESSOR: And I, I think that it helps some of my international students to hear me critique my own country.

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PROFESSOR: And I'm not an American beater...don't

RESEARCHER: oh no, I know exactly where you are coming from.

PROFESSOR: But I want people to know that God raised up this country and He doesn't need her—we need Him.

RESEARCHER: that's right...wow.

PROFESSOR: you know what...I have a conference call down stairs. Can we finish this?

RESEARCHER: Yes, we can finish it. Just, obviously, we require this course for graduation and uh other than being a Christian university, why do require this course? Why do you think we should continue requiring this course for all students?

PROFESSOR: It is because the knowledge of God is the most important knowledge in all of existence. If they don't know and they're not connected to the source of all wisdom, then they just have facts and data, and they have to put it together the best they can; but it's not going to be rooted in a transcendent reality that is above, that is above cultures and people groups, and countries, and generations. We have to have permanent wisdom—transcendent wisdom. Yes, what..

TEACHING ASSISTANT: Well, how do you add to that? But what, ummm, all truth is God's truth and if you don't where the truth comes from, what's the point of knowing it.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PROFESSOR: yeap!

RESEARCHER: amen to that. Any other final statements?

PROFESSOR and TEACHING ASSISTANT: no, can't think of any.

APPENDIX N:

EXAMPLE OF STUDENT TRANSCRIPT

November 17

5:18 pm

Library Media Room

Alias Assigned: Barbara

RESEARCHER: In thinking about the past 3 1/2 months you have been in the Old Testament course, how has this Bible course affected your life, if at all?

PARTICIPANT: ummm, well first, My experiences in this class have greatly affected the way I view the Bible. I was one who tried to read the Old Testament a couple times and got frustrated and it was like, there's no point. Why was this written, besides just historically? and ummm, I don't know, I wasn't smart enough to figure it out on my own. And, so, Dr. Chambers' passion for the subject and ummm passion just about the bible and his faith in general, really enlightened me and I saw that not only was there a historical perspective but also a theological perspective

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: ...and that each book was carefully written and when it's all put together there is rhyme and reason and a specific pattern that God wanted us to see; You can apply it to everyday life. And that God breathed and ummm and there's things that, uh, there's things for everyone

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: uh, that just you have to look at and plainly see and there's the pattern that you can plainly see, but there's then also how you can apply it to your everyday life

RESEARCHER: right

PARTICIPANT: ...which I didn't realize because I was just looking at it from a purely historical perspective

RESEARCHER: uh huh, uh huh

PARTICIPANT: so, I think that's the greatest way it as affected me

RESEARCHER: okay

PARTICIPANT: ...and just applying his passion has ignited my passion and I enjoy reading the Bible more now, whether it's Old Testament or New.

RESEARCHER: that's good. Yes, that's great. So, uh, can you cite anything particular that you have learned in the class, a particular chapter that enlightened you more than others, or a specific story in the bible or scripture that has become more meaningful to you?

PARTICIPANT: ummm, in Genesis, I never really enjoyed reading Genesis because after the first 5 or 6 chapters, it's boring, it's just history.

RESEARCHER: uh huh, uh huh

PARTICIPANT: I don't like history. It's probably my least favorite subject

RESEARCHER: uh huh, uh huh

PARTICIPANT: ummm and ummm one of the assignments we had was to read Genesis and for every chapter, which by the way there's 50 chapters in there, we had to paragraph for each. Not only just a summary, but ummm, kind of insightful detail about what we thought when we read it. Ummm, I don't know, like anything that came to your mind; it was kind of like a journal

RESEARCHER: uh, huh, okay

PARTICIPANT: ...more than just a paper. Ummm and I read the story about the flood and about how God sent the rainbow as a sign and in the past I always thought that was cool how He sent a rainbow for Noah

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: but I couldn't have cared less—it was for Noah. What does that have to me?

RESEARCHER: ah ha

PARTICIPANT: Now, as I read it, it says to me it's not just as sign to Noah or whoever was there at the time, it's a sign to everyone for the rest of our lives; and I'm like, it makes me cry because I was in his mind when he showed the first rainbow.

RESEARCHER: I've got tears in my eyes now.

RESEARCHER: mmmm

RESEARCHER: wow

PARTICIPANT: see [tears welling up in each other's eyes]

RESEARCHER: I know, I know

PARTICIPANT: ...it's so cool

RESEARCHER: ... I'm the same way

[LAUGHTER EXCHANGED]

PARTICIPANT: I think that is one of the coolest things. So every time I see a rainbow now, or every time it rains, that's what I think about. I know I am being thought of.

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: and it's not, I guess there is, I don't want to say a pessimistic side, but it's not always that joyful too. I have also thought of the rainbow as a sign of God's disappointment

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: because of what He had to do. He had to flood the whole earth because His people were not being faithful to Him

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: ...as the Lord was faithful to Israel.

RESEARCHER: right

PARTICIPANT: And it's so frustrating and when I say and think to myself well if I would have been living back then I would have been just like Noah; but I really don't think that's true [sigh/laugh] because that's a difficult task

RESEARCHER: uh hum uh hum

PARTICIPANT: ...and ummm but either way I mean, I'm in God's mind. So,

RESEARCHER: That is an awesome acknowledgement isn't it when we really think about that!

PARTICIPANT: yeah

RESEARCHER: ohhh, my gosh. I can tell by listening to you that, that has become so real to you

PARTICIPANT: yeah, everyday!

RESEARCHER: ...and, you know, one of the things I like to ask is, is how do you see the Old Testament relating to everyday life and you have already given one very strong example of that.

PARTICIPANT: yeah, and that's only one

RESEARCHER: right, right,

[LAUGHTER EXCHANGED]

RESEARCHER: ...so, is there anything else that, that has kind of stood out for you as far as what you have learned, specifically?

PARTICIPANT: Just, I mean, I've seen Israel's coming and going.

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: I've seen the Lord create Israel and I've seen the Lord be exalted by Israel, and I've Israel adore the Lord and then I've seen them get frustrated, then, oh, you're not good enough for us anymore and we want a King

RESEARCHER: uh hum

PARTICIPANT: ...and the Lord was still faithful. He brought them kings, but He brought them Kings that they needed at the time; and that shows me, because I have realize I am Israel. That shows me how He provides for me, whether, whether I am faithful or not, and I was inspired by the things I have learned in this class to write a song

RESEARCHER: ohhh

PARTICIPANT: ...which I write, like I write a lot, but it actually was like last week or 2 weeks ago or something

RESEARCHER: that's fantastic

PARTICIPANT: and like, I got it, like the song talks about how I longed to feel the Lord's presence and I longed to hear Him say beloved you are mine and I longed for rest and I longed for His living waters and I want to see His face just as Moses talked to Him face-to-face

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: and I longed to be provided for just like Israel when they were acknowledging when they were provided for and I just see, I just saw so many things that correlated from Israel and to my own life and that song is pure Israel, just pure like they were longing for the Lord and they didn't even know it

RESEARCHER: uh huh, uh huh

PARTICIPANT: ...because they were too far gone

RESEARCHER: uh huh, uh huh

PARTICIPANT: and like when I read and think about it like I get frustrated; I get happy; I get sad; I get mad

[LAUGHTER EXCHANGED]

RESEARCHER: Right

PARTICIPANT: I get all sorts of emotions

RESEARCHER: mmm hum

PARTICIPANT: and it's really taught me to just sit back and know that the Lord is providing whether I see it or not

RESEARCHER: uh huh,

PARTICIPANT: ...and He's answering my prayers whether they are in the way I want them or not; and I just need to listen and fully immerse myself in Him and what He wants me to do and what He has to say because you can't live with other Kings in your life.

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: See, I could talk for days about it

[LAUGHTER EXCHANGED]

RESEARCHER: I know, no, no, this is exactly what I want you to do. This is wonderful. The passion that is coming from you is phenomenal. I mean, everything you are saying and your body language and everything, I can tell that this is really real to you

PARTICIPANT: It is.

RESEARCHER: ...and you've said that God has become this way because of this class

PARTICIPANT: yeah

RESEARCHER: ...and the way you have been able to delve into the Word and

PARTICIPANT: Well, I have, I've read the Bible before and I have been passionate about the bible before and what God has to say but I can read it all I want but getting a different perspective on it, is really nice.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: and not only a different perspective but a passionate perspective

RESEARCHER: mmmm, from Dr. Chambers you mean?

PARTICIPANT: ...and seeing it, yeah, and seeing it from far away. I mean, he really taught me how to just look at it as the cycle, the pattern that's going on,

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: ...because Israel is like that for the rest of their time. It's always back and forth, back and forth,

RESEARCHER: right

PARTICIPANT: ...following God, not following God; up and down, up and down.

RESEARCHER: Exactly

PARTICIPANT: And that's exactly how humans are, and it's kind of taught me, here's another lesson this class has taught me, not to be judgmental

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: because I used to be very judgmental; and, I mean, then I really screwed up and I realized that you really can't be judgmental because I'm no less of a person than someone who hadn't done anything that I had done.

RESEARCHER: uh huh, uh huh

PARTICIPANT: and then when I see Israel's pattern—we're all Israel. And everyone is in a different stage in their life.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: I could be at the peak of my mountain top experience,

RESEARCHER: uh huh, very true.

PARTICIPANT: ...and someone could be having the worst day of their life

RESEARCHER: uh huh,

PARTICIPANT: and it doesn't matter because He is faithful always.

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: and it's not my job to dictate other people's lives.

RESEARCHER: Whew, thank goodness, right?

PARTICIPANT: Yes, I know. I'd do a horrible job at it might I say.

[LAUGHTER EXCHANGED]

RESEARCHER: Me too!

PARTICIPANT: So, and I'm just very thankful that when the cards are switched and I'm having the worst day,

RESEARCHER: uh humm

PARTICIPANT: ... and they're on their mountain top experience like, He's still faithful; He's still there and He still loves me.

RESEARCHER: Ohhh, thank goodness! What a wonderful promise. Do you think, have you become less judgmental because during this semester

PARTICIPANT: Definitely

RESEARCHER: and it's really because of this class?

PARTICIPANT: Yeah, well, and I think that whole process really began during my sophomore-junior year of high school.

RESEARCHER: Okay

PARTICIPANT: ummm, and I know now, it's always going to be a process I guess, trying to keep the judgmental side from getting a hold,

RESEARCHER: I agree with you 'cause it is a human tendency

PARTICIPANT: Yeah, but, I don't know, but I definitely know that I have grown a lot, and I've grown a lot from gaining intelligence from being in the class because it's taught me, it's shown me other perspectives

RESEARCHER: uh hum

PARTICIPANT: ...of exactly what my life looks like and what everyone else's life looks like.

RESEARCHER: I already think I know the answer to this, but,

[LAUGHTER EXCHANGED]

RESEARCHER: ...you are being required to take this Bible class. All students are required to come in and you have to take this or you can't graduate from here.

PARTICIPANT: Yeah

RESEARCHER: umm, so do you think that's appropriate? Do you think, think there is value in requiring students to take this class?

PARTICIPANT: Now that I've taken the class, yes. Entering the class

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: I was mad.

RESEARCHER: Were you really?

PARTICIPANT: Yeah, because, you know I want to graduate in three years

RESEARCHER: Well, sure! Of course! That makes sense.

PARTICIPANT: So, why do I want to be in Collegiate Seminar? Why do I want to have to take Old Testament History, take New Testament? Blah, blah, blah.

RESEARCHER: right

PARTICIPANT: All the classes that I don't need to take at any other university,

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: ...and I think it should have been optional, blah, blah, blah. It was just, it was frustrating because it wasn't a part of my plan, but.

RESEARCHER: [laugh]

PARTICIPANT: ...and I still think that Collegiate Seminar is still kind of a joke. [sigh/laugh] umm but I don't think Old Testament History is.

RESEARCHER: okay, so your, your attitude towards the Old Testament has changed dramatically then.

PARTICIPANT: uh humm

RESEARCHER: ...so, you do see, like you said, the rhyme and reason the way the Bible is written, you see the rhyme and reason behind why the university

PARTICIPANT: yeah, and I guess I couldn't have been that mad about it because I chose to go here.

RESEARCHER: Good point.

PARTICIPANT: So I basically chose to take the course.

RESEARCHER: uh huh, that's a good point.

PARTICIPANT: ummm, so kids really, I mean, being mad about it isn't really going to help anything, so

RESEARCHER: uh huh, that's really a good point because you know that coming in

PARTICIPANT: yeah

RESEARCHER: ...you know if you accept to come here and decide to come here, students do know that ahead of time.

PARTICIPANT: yeah. And, like, I was even mad about having to attend chapel. I have my own church

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: ...you know. I'm part of ministry groups. Why did I have to go to chapel?

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: ...and I even found value in that. Even kids, like, that sit in Old Testament, sit in chapel, or sit in whatever class they're in on their laptops with their headphones in, like, they're there and this university is about being a Christian;

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: ...it's about living the life, being passionate about being a Christian,

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: ...and, if you're not a Christian and you go here—it's your own fault!

RESEARCHER: uh hum

PARTICIPANT: Well, you chose to go here!

RESEARCHER: Obviously, this class, you said this university is about serving God and being a Christian influence; this class is obviously one. What other things around campus lead you to believe, to see, that this university is serious about faith.

PARTICIPANT: ummm, I think just kind of what I've already mentioned about—you have to go to chapel; you have to take those certain classes.

RESEARCHER: okay

PARTICIPANT: Collegiate seminar is really all about how to survive being a baby Christian.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: ummm, which is kind of odd for me because I am not a baby Christian. Ummm, but, you know, I'm getting a different perspective on things, and

RESEARCHER: Good!

PARTICIPANT: ...I'm learning more about how to ummm adhere to a baby Christian's needs.

RESEARCHER: Oh, excellent,

PARTICIPANT: so,

RESEARCHER: excellent

PARTICIPANT: You can find value in whatever class you're in.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: because the Bible says, you know, whatever you do, do it to the glory of God.

RESEARCHER: That's right.

PARTICIPANT: So, I just have to keep that in mind.

RESEARCHER: mmm hum

PARTICIPANT: And then all of the extra-curricular, you know, we have Campus Crusade for Christ; I'm personally in Campus Ministries. Ummm, there's Bible studies all the time; there's always something going on here,

RESEARCHER: yeah, that's true. It's a busy place.

PARTICIPANT: ummm, it is; and it kind of gives me a headache 'cause there is so much that I get overwhelmed and then I don't go to anything, ummm

RESEARCHER: I can understand that.

PARTICIPANT: but I still, I still like the emphasis put on

RESEARCHER: uh hum

PARTICIPANT: ummm, being a Christian, and even in my classes, all of my classes either begin or end with prayer. All of my teachers, like my English teacher, correlates English to being a Christian. My psychology teacher, psychology is a touchy subject,

RESEARCHER: It can be,

PARTICIPANT: especially among Christians.

RESEARCHER: Yes, it can be.

PARTICIPANT: And he correlates Christianity to psychology everyday. I have pages and pages of notes on just mere correlations and ummm

RESEARCHER: That's beautiful.

PARTICIPANT: I love it!!

RESEARCHER: Wow, that's great.

PARTICIPANT: I mean, how do you really correlate English with God? And how can you, it's difficult to correlate psychology with God, though they go hand-in-hand,

RESEARCHER: uh humm

PARTICIPANT: there are so many theories out there---how do you differentiate between all of them?

RESEARCHER: uh hum. Anything in this class that you've learned or become more aware of that you have made connections, personal connections, yourself to an activity you were involved in at that time or one of the other classes that you were able to, ohhh, we were just reading about this and this really applies to that situation? Anything like that, that you've made connections with?

PARTICIPANT: ummm, probably, [pause]. Sorry, I have to think. I had a thought and then it was over with.

RESEARCHER: Yeah, mine does that sometimes too.

[LAUGHTER EXCHANGED]

PARTICIPANT: ummm, I think it's more of taking it into my own life. Ummm, and it's more ummm, Old Testament has really helped me with my personal walk, which has helped my attitude towards other classes.

RESEARCHER: okay, okay

PARTICIPANT: ummm,

RESEARCHER: That's, that's a fair answer. That's good.

PARTICIPANT: Yeah, but I can't say that I've made any correlations in class

RESEARCHER: okay. When you're leading worship or ministry or anything like that—what about then?

PARTICIPANT: Well, it gives me a different perspective on some songs.

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: it helps me write songs for campus ministries because I have to do that. Ummm, it's really just made me more passionate about reaching out to those people who really aren't that interested. Some think it's illogical to believe in, you know, someone up there. But, I think it's illogical not to! And, it, because people use the 'logic'

RESEARCHER: uh huh, uh huh

PARTICIPANT: ...the 'logic' card a lot

RESEARCHER: uh huh, uh huh

PARTICIPANT: and I

RESEARCHER: you're right

PARTICIPANT: I think they have it backwards.

RESEARCHER: well, that kind of leads into something I wanted to talk to you about, which is faith. What does faith mean to you? Because it's tied to what you were just saying.

PARTICIPANT: faith is believing without seeing

RESEARCHER: uh hum

PARTICIPANT: ummm, I don't ever minister to people on faith. You don't have to. There's, so much evidence.

RESEARCHER: uh hum

PARTICIPANT: people want good evidence and the Bible, especially the Old Testament is purely historical. How can

you read that and how can you sit in that class and tell me that you still don't believe?

RESEARCHER: uh hum

PARTICIPANT: but, it's purely historical, and I know in my own life there's so many things. I can tell when I'm not up

to par; when I'm not doing what I need to be doing, ummm, to take me in the Lord's relationship further because, I mean, I'm not trying to limit God's power,

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: but He can only do so much; He can only reach His hand so far and there comes a time when I need to grab His hand

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: ...though He's chosen me, there's still a, it's a conversational relationship. You don't sit with your best friend and just talk about all of your problems

RESEARCHER: [laugh]

PARTICIPANT: ...and then not say anything back. It's, I've got to listen

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: ...and it's keeping that connection open and I can tell when the connection isn't open

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: it's normally, it's never God's fault. It's always mine and I can tell because it affects my life.

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: It affects my attitude; it affects my performance in school; it affects every part of my life.

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: and that's evidence right there—nature!

RESEARCHER: very good point

PARTICIPANT: I mean, do you really think some cosmic accident made the trees and the sky contrast as beautifully as they do? I don't, I don't understand! And, you don't even need faith to believe because it is so easy. It is so easy to just take the facts that are given to you. And, it breaks my heart

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: ...that people can't even see. It's not an accident—the complexity of my body...or even a frog. I've dissected a frog before. I was appalled; not appalled, appalled is not the right word at all. It's more like I was taken aback. I expected it to be a big mush, you can't tell what's what, just a big nasty blob, and it's not. Everything has its separate place. Everything is colored differently. How does that happen? And everything has a purpose. We have back-up muscles in our bodies to where if you get messed up in some area, you just grab another muscle and put it there; and it works because that is why it's there. You have back-up nerves that operate the same way.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: All of that is cold hard evidence. I think faith comes into play on a more abstract level when, I mean, within the next 6 days of class, I have 4 papers and 4 tests.

RESEARCHER: whew

PARTICIPANT: faith comes in

[LAUGHTER EXCHANGED]

PARTICIPANT: ...and says, I know He's going to work this out and I'm going to do all that I can with every fiber of my being then you know God is going to do the rest.

PARTICIPANT: And, I mean, that's also realizing that I have to be the productive one. God isn't going to write my papers

RESEARCHER: right, right

PARTICIPANT: but,

RESEARCHER: that's irrational

PARTICIPANT: instead, I have faith that if I use the tools God has given me and use the time God has given me wisely, and use the knowledge and the brain God has given me, I can do it. Now, it's obviously all with Him because I wouldn't have anything if it wasn't for Him.

RESEARCHER: mmmm, right. And that is having faith in Him. Do you feel this course has, ummm, that you've gone, furthering your faith development since you started this course.

PARTICIPANT: Definitely! Ummm, because the Israelites, they worried so much.

RESEARCHER: mmmm, good point.

PARTICIPANT: and they, if you take it in the eras—there's five eras. The era of theocracy, when God reigned in their life—that's where we need to be at all times. It was during that era that things were rights—things were how they needed to be

RESEARCHER: Prosperous and

PARTICIPANT: and it's when we say, God, we don't want you; we want a king. We want someone else to rule our life. I mean, it's hard.

RESEARCHER: sure, sure

PARTICIPANT: because are so many things that we could worry about and let rule our lives

RESEARCHER: sure, sure

PARTICIPANT: ...and I think this something that my experiences in the Old Testament class has helped me not to do and that is worry so much. Ummm, it's just, ummm, I'm the kind of person you can tell me not to do something like, Hey, don't touch the stove, it's hot!

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: and I'm going to touch it 8 times

[LAUGHTER EXCHANGED]

PARTICIPANT: and I'm not exaggerating on that—8 times before I say, Oh, dumb me, the stove is hot, I shouldn't touch it any more.

[LAUGHTER EXCHANGED]

PARTICIPANT: but seeing a first-hand account of what actually happened really, it just gets me

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: ...and it reminds me that He is going to be faithful; He's going to provide and

RESEARCHER: Wow, that's great!

PARTICIPANT: ...I focus so much on that, and all of these questions so far I have because that's what I struggle with as a college kid, I mean, how am I going to get out of that. [laugh] When, at college am I picking the right major? Am I going to have enough food because the cafeteria food here is horrible?

[LAUGHTER EXCHANGED]

PARTICIPANT: So, I make sure I have enough food and it's just that. Am I going to do well on these four tests? Am I going to get these four papers done?

RESEARCHER: uh hum

PARTICIPANT: and, so that's what I mean. I think there are so many aspects of God that everyone-- sometimes people need God to be their Father.

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: Sometimes God needs them. They need God to be their provider. That's what I need. And, I'm not saying you can pick or choose aspects of God, because you can't really—like they're all there. God is God!

RESEARCHER: right

PARTICIPANT: but, I think that there are certain aspects that people need more than others.

RESEARCHER: Well, it depend on the time of life we are at,

PARTICIPANT: exactly

RESEARCHER: ...the experiences we are having at that time, the difficulties we're having; and that is why God is all things.

PARTICIPANT: yeah

RESEARCHER: Because at some time or another, we are going to need all of those things.

PARTICIPANT: Exactly!

RESEARCHER: Sometimes a lot of them at the same time.

PARTICIPANT: yup!

RESEARCHER: but, not, you know, we cannot, I don't understand how anyone can go in life and not honor God and recognize that He is there.

PARTICIPANT: yeah,

RESEARCHER: You know, in times of trauma and trouble, I often say, how can people make it through that without the Lord—how can they make it through? The human side of us says you can't.

PARTICIPANT: Yeah, I know. Well, and that's so evident, ummm, my grandma died on my birthday, my last one, so my 18th, ummm, and watching my mom, ummm, cause it was my mother's mom. Ummm, watching her sadness through the funeral versus all of her sisters, there was something different about it,

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: ...and it's like it just changes your perspective on things, ummm

RESEARCHER: That's very astute of you to have noticed that.

PARTICIPANT: Well, it, my mom was very calm and just, she knew it was coming; she had been prepared for a long time and emotionally why should she sit there and ball her eyes out? It's not accomplishing anything and it's not, it's not wrong to cry and it's not wrong to be sad, but she finally got her rest.

RESEARCHER: was your grandmother a Christian?

PARTICIPANT: See...that's debatable. But, I, I don't know, because in her life she definitely didn't conduct herself in a Christianly manner; but we don't get there through that anyway. Ummm, and I know it's just based on believing and I think that she believed but wasn't physically or mentally able

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: ...and so I, like it's really hard because if you look at her life before she was sick

RESEARCHER: uh huh. I only ask that because sometimes loved ones when you know they are a Christian and they die you know their soul is with the Lord, that can cause people to have be more calm and be more at peace about the death because umm you know where they're at—that they are in a far better place.

PARTICIPANT: exactly and that what we're kind of banking on

RESEARCHER: uh humm, and maybe your mom has that peace about it

PARTICIPANT: and she did

RESEARCHER: good, good

PARTICIPANT: and I do but I don't have cold, hard evidence

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: ...to give you

RESEARCHER: uh huh, but that could be the Holy Spirit just giving you peace and affirming

PARTICIPANT: yeah

RESEARCHER: that everything was right with your grandmother's heart

PARTICIPANT: yeah

RESEARCHER: when she died; 'cause it can be in the last breath of life that

PARTICIPANT: yeah

RESEARCHER: all we have to do is acknowledge our sin and accept him

PARTICIPANT: yeah, and I can't see her heart and it's not my job

RESEARCHER: right, no your right

PARTICIPANT: uh, so I have confidence that though the Lord is a just God, He is also a merciful God

RESEARCHER: yes, thank goodness

PARTICIPANT: because my grandmother died as a child

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: she couldn't do anything for herself.

RESEARCHER: mmmm, was it Alzheimer's or something?

PARTICIPANT: Like, it was Alzheimer's like. They still don't know

RESEARCHER: oh

PARTICIPANT: ... like,

RESEARCHER: Even the autopsy didn't show for sure

PARTICIPANT: ...we sent her brain to SLU so they could look at it; it was in pieces— just fragments of everything

RESEARCHER: wow

PARTICIPANT: ummm, and ummm, I mean ultimately she died of heart failure because of a medicine issue because

some people are more careless than others

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: so, that's what really bothers me about it

RESEARCHER: That's so unfortunate, yeah, I'm sure; I'm so sorry.

PARTICIPANT: Well, that's okay.

RESEARCHER: If, you've said so many wonderful things. During some of your classes, do you remember any, any experiences in class where something particular was said or a student asked a question or a response or anything that stands out to you that was really ohhh meaningful or something that Dr. Chambers said or a student asked or that you asked and the bell really went off in your head one day during class?

PARTICIPANT: I think that, the work testament is another word for covenant and covenant is another word for promise

and that's what the whole entire Old Testament was based on

RESEARCHER: mmm

PARTICIPANT: a bunch of covenants, a bunch of promises

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: ...between the Lord and us

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: whether it was Israel or other people throughout like Moses or David, you name it; it's a promise and ummm just that whole like looking back like outward perspective of seeing all the ways that God gives us promises and keeps His promises, and, because you can just see it.

RESEARCHER: well, you've obviously just tied, that's the main theme throughout the whole Bible and the Old Testament and this course.

PARTICIPANT: yeah,

RESEARCHER: And I know that Dr. Chambers draws that home a lot

PARTICIPANT: yeah

RESEARCHER: and then he makes a connection with the Old Testament with the New Testament a lot because you

can't have the New Testament without the Old Testament

PARTICIPANT: yeah, and I just really like that, I mean, it even goes back to when I was talking about the flood and the rainbow

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: that's a promise

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: ...I promise I'm never going to flood the earth like I did

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: ...and

RESEARCHER: That reminds me of a song I learned when I grew up , Standing on the Promises of God. Did you

PARTICIPANT: Oh, yeah,

RESEARCHER: I grew up with that song and when I would sing it when I was young, it was mouthing the words and a bouncy little melody and then when I go older it's like, I can do that

PARTICIPANT: Yeah, yeah..It's so crazy

RESEARCHER: ..and I can stand on His promises

PARTICIPANT: mmm ummm,

[LAUGHTER EXCHANGED]

PARTICIPANT: ...and I love it! I seriously now love the Old Testament and I have to base my life on His promises and His promise that he will provide for me

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: ...and that He will be faithful ummm even when I'm not being faithful to Him; and even His promise that He'll discipline.

RESEARCHER: True

PARTICIPANT: ummm, which I guess brings out the fatherly aspect, ummm, because He discipline Israel

RESEARCHER: Yes, He did

PARTICIPANT: ...and discipline is not a bad thing, which is another thing that I've learned, which has nothing to do with a Christian aspect; it's more just like I guess more of a psychological and ummm when I parent, like discipline isn't bad. God disciplined out of love.

RESEARCHER: uh hum, uh hum

PARTICIPANT: ...and ummm realizing that. So, I guess, that's really funny 'cause I just realized that, ummm, [laugh] He's teaching me how to be a parent—that's so funny.

RESEARCHER: That's a great connection that you've made, yeah. You mentioned earlier about the one ummm division of the Lutheran faith being very strict and living under the Old Testament and of course the Old Testament has the 10 Commandments. Okay, and ummm, that was a set of laws and where, how do you see yourself ummm, what guides your behavior and what do you try to make your decisions based on? Do you, is it, is it based on the 10 Commandments and these are the rules; is it more of things that you have internalized on your own life that you feel is what is helping you become who you are becoming and guides your behavior. Where are you in that?

PARTICIPANT: I

RESEARCHER: Because that is part of maturity.

PARTICIPANT: Yeah, I think that, this is funny, because I'm very interested in psychology too, so all of these psychological things are popping up

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: ummm, I think that it's possible to live purely based on the 10 Commandments and, and I mean you

can and I think we all do, but it's just a matter rather we realize it or not

RESEARCHER: uh hum

PARTICIPANT: umm and I know that my parents have done an amazing job of giving me the tools and resources I need and the wisdom I need; and when I say wisdom, I mean wisdom. I don't ummm mean intelligence and I don't mean pure knowledge

RESEARCHER: uh hum

PARTICIPANT: ummm, they've taught me not only what's wrong, what's right, but how to decide for myself what's

wrong and what's right. Ummm, and I think the biggest rules I live by is not to be judgmental—that the most important is just talking about love, and not in a hippie way but more in a, I live by rules of love. Like He commands us to love others. Ummm, to love Him, and I think it's really important to serve Him and serve others. Ummm, providing them with the basic needs, ummm, you know, just your regular five, food, clothes, water

RESEARCHER: uh hum

PARTICIPANT: ...shelter, LOVE! Ummm,

RESEARCHER: [laugh] Maslow

PARTICIPANT: Yeah, and just showing people genuine kindness and compassion; and people ask, they start to ask in the hippie way, well, where's God in that? You can't know love with God, because God is Love.

RESEARCHER: ummmm

PARTICIPANT: and, I pray every day that through my actions of love people would see that there is something more to my motives than just that I'm a nice person

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: that they would see, there's something, there's something there that I'm missing that I don't have that I need

RESEARCHER: uh hum

PARTICIPANT: because and I want that

RESEARCHER: So, your motivation is to not just live by the 10 Commandments, it's, it's to, your motivation behind it is not because God will bless me with this or that He will give me that, or I will be punished, it's, it's beyond that.

PARTICIPANT: Yeah, it's. I know I am now here to serve—that's my purpose in life. People may say you can't boil it down but can—it's serving! Because through serving the Lord comes love, comes obedience

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: ...comes everything—comes all the 10 Commandments

RESEARCHER: uh hum

PARTICIPANT: I mean, that's the heart of it—serving

RESEARCHER: right

PARTICIPANT: and ummm, love is something that is universal because I mean it's just like the different aspects of God

RESEARCHER: uh hum

PARTICIPANT: ummm some people need a father,

RESEARCHER: right

PARTICIPANT: some people need a provider, blah, blah, blah. Everyone needs love! Everyone! It doesn't matter what stage of life you're in. It doesn't matter what you're going through—everyone needs it; everyone longs for it

RESEARCHER: ummm

PARTICIPANT: and ummm I mean, I just love that verse, God is love. You can't know love without knowing God

RESEARCHER: That's really beautiful

PARTICIPANT: yeah, you can't really know God without knowing love---because, I mean, HE IS! It's so amazing!

RESEARCHER: It is amazing when you really think about it. It's awesome.

PARTICIPANT: Yeah!

RESEARCHER: Wow!

PARTICIPANT: yeah, and then going in to 1st Corinthians where it talks about love is patient, love is kind

RESEARCHER: uh hum

PARTICIPANT: I mean, that's great! And I don't mean great like, awesome, I mean like great like there's so much there

RESEARCHER: yes, there is

PARTICIPANT: ..there's so much that love shows, that love is, and ummm, it's really important. And there's the different aspects of love, which the English language really kind of stinks at this. Ummm, but I mean there's the brotherly love, there's the romantic love ummm

RESEARCHER: I actually teach that in one of my classes, the different kinds of love

PARTICIPANT: yeah,

RESEARCHER: You're right, the English language really misses it a lot

PARTICIPANT: I mean, God is that! Ah...that's so cool!

[LAUGHTER EXCHANGED]

RESEARCHER: Yes, it is so cool!

PARTICIPANT: sorry, that was a lot

RESEARCHER: No—what you've been saying is fabulous; it's just what I was hoping for. Has your interest in reading the scriptures, studying the scriptures changed because of this course?

PARTICIPANT: Yeah, I used to only read the New Testament because I couldn't get through the Old Testament. It was a real drag; I only liked Psalms and Proverbs and maybe a couple of things like the end of the world, which I don't even really care about any more, 'cause it's irrelevant

[LAUGHTER EXCHANGED]

PARTICIPANT: ummm, but, ummm,

RESEARCHER: So do you see the pattern that you are setting now in this class might be something that you will continue

PARTICIPANT: oh, definitely. When I, I put a lot more time and effort into reading Genesis and writing that paper than I really had time for really; I had three chapters a day and

RESEARCHER: that's a lot

PARTICIPANT: ...and, but I sat, I spent hours just studying-making correlations between the previous chapter, between thing that were said in class, ummm, and there's a lot, like, and even correlations today. And it really helps that my boyfriend is a seminarian.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: because he helps me make those correlations too

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: ummm, because sometimes I'm not as knowledgeable as I should be. Umm,. And there's stuff that correlates to TODAY! --to even like ethnic groups today, like, it's so

RESEARCHER: Can you remember any of those that you made?

PARTICIPANT: Yeah, and this is debatable, but I am, I really think that this is what it was talking about, ummm. I think it's the tribe of Judea, maybe, I don't know, but there's some tribe and ummm I mean the Lord says, you're going to be against your brothers for the rest of your days and ummm just makes a whole bunch of prophecies right there and I'm not trying to stereotype

RESEARCHER: Right, I know, I understand

PARTICIPANT: ...ummm, I think it's more towards the Muslims I think it is. I don't remember quite how it was put, ummm, but it's just towards that group, which I thought was very interesting

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: ummm, a very neat correlation that you can't just read once or twice or three times, ummm

RESEARCHER: So, by making that correlation, really what you're saying is the Old Testament is being fulfilled now

PARTICIPANT: Yeah

RESEARCHER: that what was prophesized and promised then, we are seeing in our everyday life now

PARTICIPANT: It's so cool! Ummm, it sticks that there is a tribe out there that's really against all of its brothers, but I mean, that's the way it has to be—the Lord said so. Ummm, I think it's really cool and it's really neat that you can see that.

RESEARCHER: uh huh. I'm thinking, isn't it Ishmael that

PARTICIPANT: Oh, it's Ishmael, yeah, that's right

RESEARCHER: That goes back to the foundation of the Muslims

PARTICIPANT: Yup, that's right. Good, because I thinking it's really not Judah.

RESEARCHER: Yeah, as you were talking about that I was thinking, no, it's really Ishmael.

[LAUGHTER EXCHANGED]

PARTICIPANT: Yeah, thank you. Ummm, Yeah, but I thought that was really cool; and so, I really looked for those correlations.

RESEARCHER: That's really exciting that you even, that you're excited about doing that because that shows the Old Testament is really real to you—that it is as relevant today as it was when it was written about the Israelites.

PARTICIPANT: Exactly! And that's what I missed before this class

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: —before Old Testament I missed the relevance. As I said before—just purely historical

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: ummm, Oh, who cares,

RESEARCHER: It's a nice story

PARTICIPANT: yeah, nice story

RESEARCHER: uh huh, uh huh

PARTICIPANT: Yeah, oh that's cool—two animals of each kind

[LAUGHTER EXCHANGED]

PARTICIPANT: ...how cool, I mean, but it's so relevant today. I love it!

RESEARCHER: Well, just look at the life of David.

PARTICIPANT: Yeah, David is my favorite Bible character because

RESEARCHER: Yeah, Me too!

PARTICIPANT: He reminds me of myself. [pause/laugh]

RESEARCHER: In what ways?

PARTICIPANT: well, he loved the Lord and he was a man after God's own heart. And I'm not saying I'm a man—I'm a woman, and I'm after God's own heart.

RESEARCHER: absolutely!

PARTICIPANT: And, like, I desire to see God's face just like David desired. And he desired that restored relationship with God that I desire myself. Ummm, but yet David was a hypocrite

[LAUGHTER EXCHANGED]

RESEARCHER: You said earlier that you blew it—David blew it!

PARTICIPANT: yup

RESEARCHER: right? We all blow it. I cannot tell you how many times I've blown it in my life and I have to pray, Lord forgive me, I didn't mean that; or Lord help me not to take this for granted. Uh hum, uh hum

PARTICIPANT: and, he messed up but faced the consequences, just like I have to face them and, but he still lived for the glory of God

RESEARCHER: [sigh] Yes, he did

PARTICIPANT: I love it!

RESEARCHER: Yes, he did

PARTICIPANT: and then there's Joshua, which is my second favorite

[LAUGHTER EXCHANGED]

PARTICIPANT: ..but he didn't blow it—at least from what I remember

RESEARCHER: no, no I don't think so.

PARTICIPANT: He was really cool; but that's why he is not my first favorite; it's because, I mean, I can't, I just relate to David

RESEARCHER: relate to David and the vulnerability that he fell under and yet he prostrated himself before the Lord

PARTICIPANT: yup! I know!

[tears welling up in both]

RESEARCHER: Yeah, I can't hold the tears back either. You've already mentioned with your boyfriend, soon to be fiancé, ummm, that you've talked about scriptures and getting more understanding about it; and so, ummm, it sounds like this class has changed or led your relationship with him to a different level?

PARTICIPANT: It definitely has, ummm, because that was an assignment that we decided that we were going to do together ummm, I have issues because I am such an independent person. I don't want help—I can read Genesis myself.

[LAUGHTER EXCHANGED]

RESEARCHER: You sound like me.

[LAUGHTER EXCHANGED]

PARTICIPANT: Exactly and it was something that I made a conscious effort, ummm, Josh you read to me, I'll write what I think and then we'll discuss it. And I used some of his knowledge and I learned how to think and analyze and I've kind of taken that for myself now, which helps me now to read the Bible to this day.

RESEARCHER: uh hum, uh hum

PARTICIPANT: and it definitely, it helped me to relate to him more too. Because, I mean, let's face it, I'm in college and he's in the seminary. He's being taught

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: ummm, He would have been taught the Old Testament class like in a very short period of time, but learned a lot more.

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: ummm, and because that class, I like, I've learned a lot about what Dr. Chambers has to say, ummm, and in the seminary, it's more about developing your own story

RESEARCHER: true

PARTICIPANT: ..which is what Old Testament is also designed for

RESEARCHER: Which is what I think Dr. Chambers' hope is for you.

PARTICIPANT: And he's doing a great job.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: ummm, those assignments REALLY helped me ummm because if I sat there and listened to his lecture and like, yeah, that's cool, and I'll go unto my next class.

RESEARCHER: yeah, right

PARTICIPANT: ummm, and yeah, it's cool that he's passionate, but I need to apply it

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: so I can learn that for myself—so I can learn that passion for myself.

RESEARCHER: mmmm. It sounds like you have been doing a great job at that.

PARTICIPANT: well, thank you.

RESEARCHER: What about other relationships with people—your family or friends? Has this course been instrumental in perhaps changing other relationships?

PARTICIPANT: Well, I think that because it has had such a tremendous affect on my attitude and just my outlook on

life, because I've not had the best relationship with my family. We're all Christians, but I had like a stupid period earlier,

RESEARCHER: [laugh] yeah, we all do.

PARTICIPANT: ...during my junior and senior year of high school. I mean I didn't do anything tragic or anything. I didn't drink or do drugs or whatever, my mind was out of it. I wasn't thinking in a godly manner, and I didn't care. I still led worship at church and I cared then, it was more like I didn't have it set as an active part of my life and ummm, being that the rest of my family was making God and active part of their life.

RESEARCHER: ummm, okay

PARTICIPANT: It's helped me to relate to my family better

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: and it's really helped me with my mom's relationship

RESEARCHER: mmmm, good

PARTICIPANT: because she's really excited about all of the things I am learning and this class has really helped me mature. Not just as a Christian, but as a woman as well.

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: ...and a woman after God's own heart and she sees that—my dad sees that.

RESEARCHER: Oh, so they have noticed a difference in you

PARTICIPANT: yeah

RESEARCHER: ...as well

PARTICIPANT: ...and, ummm, Yeah, I think that's the biggest thing. I mean it's just more conversation between my friends and

RESEARCHER: okay

PARTICIPANT: I don't really focus on friends very much though

RESEARCHER: okay

PARTICIPANT: ...because ummm, I don't know, it's, I could live by myself if I wanted

RESEARCHER: okay

PARTICIPANT: ummm, I chose not to because I don't really think that that's what we're really intended for

RESEARCHER: I agree

PARTICIPANT: ummm, I think we were created for community, so I do what I can ummm,

RESEARCHER: You could teach part of my class

[LAUGHTER EXCHANGED]

RESEARCHER: ...because I always say that

PARTICIPANT: Yeah

RESEARCHER: ...God made us to, to be interdependent

PARTICIPANT: Yeah! That's so true and ummm, so, but it's definitely, especially the whole scene. I guess how like seeing Israel develop ummm and knowing that it's my life it helps me relate to my dorm mates, I guess.

RESEARCHER: okay

PARTICIPANT: because, 'cause it's helped the judgmental side of me

RESEARCHER: right

PARTICIPANT: I mean when you live with 4 girls in your room,

RESEARCHER: ohhhh

PARTICIPANT: ...like, you know what I'm saying, you can't be judgmental

RESEARCHER: right

PARTICIPANT: ummm, Like, I could say it's helped that

RESEARCHER: good

PARTICIPANT: 'cause I definitely had judgmental issues

RESEARCHER: uh hum. Again, that's a human tendency for us to do

PARTICIPANT: yeah

RESEARCHER: and the fact that you are cognizant of that all of the time now, has automatically made you less judgmental

PARTICIPANT: right

RESEARCHER: ...because you are aware of it. When I'm aware of something in my life it does shape my behavior and

it does change how I think about things, so

PARTICIPANT: yeah

RESEARCHER: ...I really do appreciate that about

PARTICIPANT: yeah

RESEARCHER: What about ummm, your health behaviors—your physical health, your mental health? Do you see this class having, having a different attitude about that?

PARTICIPANT: ummm, well definitely, bringing up the attitude, 'cause it's changed and it's, but it's just my strengthened relationship with the Lord. Ummm, I think about my body as a temple of God and I believe that we as Christians should eat healthy or do something to benefit our body, ummm, I mean that I'm not saying you can't have chocolate cake or whatever,

RESEARCHER: oh, sure

PARTICIPANT: I mean, I tried it today—it was horrible so I didn't eat it.

[LAUGHTER EXCHANGED]

PARTICIPANT: but, and I personally like, I don't have the will power to eat healthy all of the time. I don't have the will power to exercise

RESEARCHER: I don't know too many people that do

PARTICIPANT: ... all of the time. I refuse to make time. If I exercise, though I would like it to be for the Lord, it's probably more for personal gain for myself

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: ummm, I'm not going to sugarcoat it—that's what it is. You know, know wants to really tell a lie, or whatever

RESEARCHER: sure, sure, But the fact that you realize you are a temple, ummm, this course, has it made you even more aware of that?

PARTICIPANT: Yeah, because that was something that I was aware of but ummm, it's definitely been emphasized a lot more, and I think psychology has kind of helped this

too. Ummm, I need to get adequate amount of sleep. I'm not going to be one of those college students that go to bed between one and three and wakes up for their 8 o'clock class

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: I mean, it's not good. I need to eat right. I need to get adequate amount of sleep; oh, and time management. I mean, it has really affected all of those things in my life.

RESEARCHER: good, good,

PARTICIPANT: it's helped my stress level

RESEARCHER: ohhh, that's very helpful

PARTICIPANT: because, I mean, I have four papers, four tests

RESEARCHER: right

PARTICIPANT: And am I going to stress about it?

RESEARCHER: you don't seem like you are.

PARTICIPANT: I can't, because it's not going to do anything, because God, God's going to provide.

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: He's given me the tools I need, so I'm going to do that.

RESEARCHER: You already said that—if you do your part

PARTICIPANT: Exactly

RESEARCHER: you can put the rest on Him.

PARTICIPANT: I'm like, it's my job being the temple of God, you know, to get that sleep, to get what I need

RESEARCHER: uh hum

PARTICIPANT: because, and this goes back to, with everything you do, do it to the glory of God. I'm a student. I may not like all of my classes; I may not like all of my teachers; I may not care; I may not want to be here, like, but, I pray now for a desire to learn, ummm. And along with prayer and a healthy routine my performance is better in school .

RESEARCHER: wow

PARTICIPANT: I'm getting good grades, ummm, and I can't, if I didn't realize that I needed a healthy routine ummm, not just as a student, but as a Christian, like I think that is something that a lot of people overlook because it's not. The Bible doesn't say, thou shalt get 8 hours of sleep at night; thou shalt not have caffeine. I think that's very important and it's really important for college students to realize and I wish everyone had that mindset.

RESEARCHER: mmmm, I do to.

PARTICIPANT: It's made my life so much easier

RESEARCHER: oh, sure

PARTICIPANT: and it makes me feel better about myself

RESEARCHER: uh hum

PARTICIPANT: and ummm, not on a self-esteem level, but I mean, I know I'm doing the right thing. When people dog on me when I go to bed at 10:00 at night, but I, hey, guess who wakes up at 6:00 with a good attitude

[LAUGHTER EXCHANGED]

RESEARCHER: good for you

PARTICIPANT: and, ummm, it allows me to get the time I really need

RESEARCHER: yeah, that's really great. You mentioned prayer, and you said you, you lead worship

PARTICIPANT: yes

RESEARCHER: and has this class and what you have been learning had any affect on your prayer life or the way you have been entering into worship with the Lord

PARTICIPANT: definitely ummm, my prayer is a lot more conversational because, which is something that I learned in 7th grade. I read a book about conversation, what was it? Hearing God, by Dallas Willard. But I'm pretty sure

RESEARCHER: I've read some things by him

PARTICIPANT: Yeah, I, When did I read that? I think I read that, like, 8th grade or freshman year or something

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: ummm, and it talked about that, and that's kind of a hefty book for someone that age

RESEARCHER: It is!

PARTICIPANT: ...and even for me now, like, ummm. But I did get something out it and I did understand that it's not just a one-sided relationship, ummm

RESEARCHER: But that's been strengthened even because of this class – it's more real

PARTICIPANT: yeah, because seeing the conversations that went on

RESEARCHER: ahhh

PARTICIPANT: ummm, like, I saw that it was possible. I've come to realization that I don't need to sit with Him like this; I don't need to see Him

RESEARCHER: right

PARTICIPANT: I know He's there

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: ummm, because He's faithful to His word. And, well, I take that and I run with it because that's what I need. All the stories point to his faithfulness.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: ummm, and that's how He has things like he desires that from me

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: and it's so evident through all of the covenants.

RESEARCHER: so, you've gotten away from structured prayers

PARTICIPANT: yeah

RESEARCHER: ...more, just to, this in my, friend, my companion, and I'm

PARTICIPANT: Exactly,

RESEARCHER: wow, that's really beautiful. What about your worship?

PARTICIPANT: worship

RESEARCHER: How has that changed?

PARTICIPANT: uh, Old Testament, ummm, again just seeing that face-to-face relationship with God, and knowing that I can have that now, ummm. This is as close as face-to-face I can get with Him now—until that day comes.

RESEARCHER: right, right,

PARTICIPANT: I mean, He could show Himself to me but He really never did fully outright show Himself to anyone. It was always like through a burning bush or something, because He can't. I mean, you'd die.

[LAUGHTER EXCHANGED]

PARTICIPANT: just the whole face-to-face, ummm, it's helped me to calm down before worship. I get really, I'm not a perfectionist but ummm, when it comes to music I am.

RESEARCHER: okay

PARTICIPANT: like, I get really, really stressed out and if something's wrong, whether it's me or someone else, ummm, I get frustrated and it starts to lose its worshipful

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: point. Ummm, and I

RESEARCHER: The focus is in the wrong place

PARTICIPANT: Yeah, and having the constant emphasis, ummm, because of how much this class has taught me and influenced my own spiritual life, ummm

RESEARCHER: Spiritual life. What does spirituality mean to you? It's something I'm interested in. Define spirituality for me.

PARTICIPANT: well, I think it's just more like your internalization of God, of having God at the center of your heart; having God as your king, ummm

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: just holding that theocracy and ummm how you not only internalize it, but also externalize it as well.

RESEARCHER: oh, mmmm

PARTICIPANT: and ummm, I mean people toss those kinds of words

RESEARCHER: You do hear spirituality used a lot of different ways these days

PARTICIPANT: yeah, and I can't, I mean, [PAUSE] I, I think it's just a fluff word really like, spirituality, like

RESEARCHER: It can be

PARTICIPANT: I really think that is really what it is because like spirituality, ummm, I don't know, it's to walk with God really, ummm,

RESEARCHER: Your talk with Him is an intimate relationship with Him, so, is that part of spirituality

PARTICIPANT: Yeah! Spirituality is just like my walk with the Lord

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: ummm, which is my life! I can't even narrow it down; it's, I just have to say, walk with the Lord

RESEARCHER: right

PARTICIPANT: because if it doesn't influence every aspect of your life then you're doing something wrong

RESEARCHER: uh hum, uh hum. I was once asked if I could separate my Christian beliefs, my Christianity, from a

position that I was going to serve in—it was a public school board and I looked at them and said, No—How can I separate my being—it’s who I am.

PARTICIPANT: Yeah, and if you’re not a Christian, you don’t understand that!

RESEARCHER: It, it went over their heads—several of the people uh, because they couldn’t get it—they didn’t understand it.

PARTICIPANT: It’s sad that they don’t have that for themselves.

RESEARCHER: yeah, it’s very sad. But, that is part of our mission here on Earth

PARTICIPANT: yeah

RESEARCHER: is, is to share the good news. What about your, uh, meaning and purpose in life? We hear that thrown

around a lot too—what brings people meaning and gives purpose to their lives. How’s this course affected that or maybe help you articulate what meaning and purpose in life for you is?

PARTICIPANT: Well, when you break the Old Testament down, it’s in 5 eras—era of formation, era of theocracy, the era of monarchy, I’m trying to remember them all. The era of captivity, and the era of frustration.

RESEARCHER: [laugh] Very good!

PARTICIPANT: uh, So what! So what do all those big words mean?

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: when you break it down even further ummm, God formed Israel in first area, in the first era, and the second area

[LAUGHTER EXCHANGED]

PARTICIPANT: why do I keep saying area? ...and the second era god was Israel’s king and in the third Israel rejected

God as their king umm, and they wanted someone better. And the fourth era they were held captive

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: because that was God’s fatherly discipline for them. And in the fifth it’s that face-to-face relationship—the seeking of the restored relationship with God

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: and that’s MY LIFE and that’s MY PURPOSE, I know now that God gave me purpose in the first era. He created Israel—He created ME! Why would God create us to just walk around aimlessly?

[LAUGHTER EXCHANGED]

RESEARCHER: uh hum

PARTICIPANT: and that’s where it all began.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: ummm, and just, I mean, just going through the whole cycle. I mean, when we don’t serve Him and live for Him—we are nothing.

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: Like, Oh, there you go—you don’t really have a purpose.

RESEARCHER: right, right

PARTICIPANT: and ummm, People say you can't find truth; you can't find a purpose, but it's right there!

RESEARCHER: uh huh. He purposefully created us

PARTICIPANT: He created us to love us and to serve; therefore, we are to love Him

RESEARCHER: uh hum

PARTICIPANT: I told you! Love!

[LAUGHTER EXCHANGED]

PARTICIPANT: that's right

RESEARCHER: absolutely! Amen! Wow! Your thoughts of your future, ummm, obviously, you're thinking about the future with your future husband and career

PARTICIPANT: yes,

RESEARCHER: ummm, how has this course made you think differently about your future? Or could you start seeing

more of your future coming together—the plan for it because of this course?

PARTICIPANT: Well, experiences in this class have definitely boosted my passion for loving others, and loving others is kind of my motive for doing whatever I do. I've realized, you know, the course has changed my attitude and whatever I do now, I am going to be happy as long as I do it for the glory of God. Ummm, because I kind of struggle with that right now. I mean I talked earlier about how I am getting the life sucked out of me on the musical level

RESEARCHER: right, right

PARTICIPANT: but I have to use music

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: ummm, I write. Does that mean I am supposed to sell my songs or does that mean I am supposed to perform my songs?

RESEARCHER: ummm

PARTICIPANT: ummm, I would love being a teacher. I would love to teach a choir but would also love to teach theory or piano or voice and they're so many other aspects ummm of a career that I could go into ummm, but when it boils down like—it's all for the glory of God. I really don't think I can choose the wrong career

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: ...now because if God places the desire on my heart

RESEARCHER: right

PARTICIPANT: ...and I pursue it.

RESEARCHER: We just have to ummm heed it and step into it, by faith,

PARTICIPANT: Exactly

RESEARCHER: uh huh, uh huh

PARTICIPANT: I don't need to not worry about how much it's going to pay because ummm

RESEARCHER: there you go

PARTICIPANT: because as long as God is my king, it's, seriously, God is just the center of life and when you do anything outside of that little bubble of God you're not accomplishing anything

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: and it's not going to matter

RESEARCHER: That's a very important statement that you just made—it's not going to matter and that speaks directly to where you're drawing your sense of purpose and meaning in life—it's to things that DO matter, not to things that we think as humans matter so much here on this Earth, because they really don't. So many things in life don't matter

PARTICIPANT: The amount of money I make isn't going to matter

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: Where I'm going to live isn't going to matter. It's the people I impact.

RESEARCHER: mmmm

PARTICIPANT: and, It's so clearly talked about at church and how like you're at a certain place and you're there for a reason. I may not like St. Louis, which is a lie, I love St. Louis, uh, but I'm here for a reason

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: I may not like college, but I'm here for a reason and I'm going to impact people while I can

RESEARCHER: uh hum

PARTICIPANT: because I don't know who else they're going to come into contact

RESEARCHER: That's true

PARTICIPANT: and ummm

RESEARCHER: We may entertain a stranger

PARTICIPANT: Exactly,

RESEARCHER: It could be the Lord, and angel

PARTICIPANT: yeah, and I could be a private voice teacher or a private piano teacher; I could be a choir director; I could be a music therapist—It doesn't matter.

RESEARCHER: uh hum

PARTICIPANT: No matter what I do, I'm going to serve the Lord, because I've seen first hand what happens when you don't

RESEARCHER: there you go, from the Bible

PARTICIPANT: Exactly

RESEARCHER: absolutely. Why did you choose to come here?

PARTICIPANT: Because, ummm, If you don't get your degree...Oh, are you talking about to Missouri Baptist?

RESEARCHER: Yeah, to Missouri Baptist.

PARTICIPANT: because it was the only place that offered not only ummm a good music program, but ministry as well—and a combination of both as well. Ummm, I mean I could go to a secular university and worship at my church and still be fine—whatever.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: ummm, but I was excited about the ministry opportunities I have. I'm a part of Shelter, which is an all-girls traveling ministry team, ummm, and it's developed not only my private walk but also my musicianship, ummm,

RESEARCHER: At here you mean, or, you said, It's developed my

PARTICIPANT: The music group that MOBAP has to offer

RESEARCHER: okay

PARTICIPANT: ummm, and, you know, MOBAP has impacted me so much more than I thought it would, 'cause,

RESEARCHER: mmmm, That's great.

PARTICIPANT: you know, obviously, I wasn't excited about taking Old Testament History

RESEARCHER: right

PARTICIPANT: and I love it kind of as I talked earlier. I mean, I love all the correlations in my classes, ummm. It's

really neat. I'm learning to do everything for the glory of God ummm,

RESEARCHER: that's great

PARTICIPANT: and I love it.

RESEARCHER: You know, part of the mission of this university is to integrate faith and learning

PARTICIPANT: yes

RESEARCHER: that, that it not just get lip service but that it really do, that we really do make it happen here. So, this course being required to graduate from this university, being required to, uh, do you think that plays an important role in the integration of faith and learning here—to help fulfill the mission of this university?

PARTICIPANT: ummm, well, when I looked at it straight, before taking the course, I mean, there are other universities

that have to do that because they are affiliated with a certain denomination

RESEARCHER: right

PARTICIPANT: So, I was just like, whatever, like, ohhhh, that stinks that I have to go to chapels, I have to take this

course. Like, they don't even care. They, they don't care about it. They're just doing it because they have to.

RESEARCHER: okay, okay

PARTICIPANT: and it's such a lie! That's such a wrong way to think; they're not doing it because they have to;

they're doing it because they care. I see personally in the faculty, like, The teachers have their own personal walk with the Lord. They're not here just to teach. They're here to do that integration of faith and learning.

RESEARCHER: mmmm, that's great. So, not only Dr. Chambers but other

PARTICIPANT: other teachers—exactly!

RESEARCHER: That's great

PARTICIPANT: and I especially like, ummm, I like Dr. Chambers because he is in a very high position at our

university and it shows that even HE cares and

RESEARCHER: that's a good point

PARTICIPANT: I'm also very impressed with President Lacey and Dr. Chambers because they share their faith and are good role models. President Lacey's ummm been a speaker in chapel a couple times

RESEARCHER: right

PARTICIPANT: and he cares—he has a personal walk. Like, I loved what he had to say ummm, he talked about different personality types

RESEARCHER: I know, that was great, wasn't it.

PARTICIPANT: yeah, I loved it. And, ummm, just to see that on every different ladder at the university

RESEARCHER: uh huh, well, you know he talked about happiness

PARTICIPANT: uh hum

RESEARCHER: that was fantastic, and I was thinking about you when you were talking about attitude change because happiness—how do you define happiness? You know, everyone defines it differently but it is, it has to do with attitude, because material things really do not bring us happiness

PARTICIPANT: yeah

RESEARCHER: ...it's really our attitude and the way we think about things

PARTICIPANT: yeah, mind over matter

[LAUGHTER EXCHANGED]

RESEARCHER: it is

PARTICIPANT: people always, ummm, I like to invite people to things or throw things together myself. Ummm, I put up a Christmas tree last week

RESEARCHER: oh, fun

PARTICIPANT: I was really excited

RESEARCHER: [laugh]

PARTICIPANT: and ummm, I invited a whole bunch of people that go to go to Wal-Mart with me to pick out all of the stuff and to come back and ummm put up the Christmas tree and like people didn't really like ummm theirs, like, ummm, whatever, like it doesn't matter. It's making your own fun

RESEARCHER: yeah

PARTICIPANT: ummm, and I really, I think that's what a lot of people lack, ummm, especially when put in situations that they're not too fond of

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: I mean, I can sit and moan and groan and not be happy or excited ummm because I don't want to be there

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: or I could just look at it from a different perspective

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: and I love it and especially ummm I think the most important one is doing the right thing to the glory of

God.

RESEARCHER: Absolutely. Have there been a lot different perspectives shared in class, ummm, in the Bible class— students maybe sharing their own thoughts about something or disagreeing about something?

PARTICIPANT: I don't think a lot of students have disagreed, uh. It's normally the same couple of students that talk

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: I personally wish more students talked ummm. Yeah, that I can't say that a lot of people have disagreed. There have not been different perspective, just said in a different manner. Ummm,

RESEARCHER: coming from different experiences in life

PARTICIPANT: yeah, exactly. Ummm, so, Another advantage of this class is having the different perspectives form classmates, but also learning about how God has worked through them this semester.

RESEARCHER: Well, that does sound like it's another advantage of this course

PARTICIPANT: yeah, knowing that there's people there ummm you're not the only one

RESEARCHER: mmmm, right

PARTICIPANT: That's very important at this age

RESEARCHER: To know that we're not the only ones struggling with particular issues or things. it is very helpful to

know that we're not alone—and we're never alone because of the Lord

PARTICIPANT: yeah

RESEARCHER: We just talked earlier about being interdependent and I think, I know that is part of God's plan

PARTICIPANT: yeah. Why did he make Adam and Eve?

RESEARCHER: right

PARTICIPANT: Not, I mean, you could take that in more of a romantic relationship

RESEARCHER: sure, sure

PARTICIPANT: but, I take it as straight forward—man was lonely

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: Man needed a companion. We all need companions.

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: ummm, again not just in that loving relationship ummm but in a more in just a friend-to-friend relationship

RESEARCHER: I totally agree with you. My husband is my best friend

PARTICIPANT: uh humm

RESEARCHER: and it sounds like your future husband

PARTICIPANT: uh humm

RESEARCHER: ... is already your friend

PARTICIPANT: he is

RESEARCHER: and that's what God intended. And I totally agree with that the sexual part of it was a part of it

PARTICIPANT: right

RESEARCHER: but I agree with you, the true meaning of it was the relationship, ummm to fulfill the loneliness and to be a helpmate

PARTICIPANT: Exactly

RESEARCHER: to support each other. LOVE

PARTICIPANT: yup, it's so important

RESEARCHER: It is. Wow, you have been fantastic; you really have. I will probably cry again when I type all of this

up. Is there any other final statement that you would like to make as far as the importance of or the impact that this class has had on you?

PARTICIPANT: I think it's just all boiling down to having that passionate perspective that Dr. Chambers has to offer and I am very thankful that he taught the class. I thought about transferring

RESEARCHER: did you?

PARTICIPANT: ...Jonathan White's class because I, ummm, Dr. Chambers likes to make everything into lists. Uh, they are very general, which I used to think was a bad thing and now when I look back I think it's good because it teaches themes

RESEARCHER: ahh

PARTICIPANT: ummm, it teaches to love Him, serve Him, trust Him, fear Him, and I mean I pretty much put the same

4-5 answers down on all of the lists because I couldn't differentiate in my mind the different lists

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: and I'm so thankful that I stuck in his class

RESEARCHER: It sounds like he has been gifted in being able to bring the Word so that you can apply it to your life

PARTICIPANT: yeah

RESEARCHER: which is exactly what you said earlier, that that's what students really can gather from it IF they are interested in doing that

PARTICIPANT: yeah, and I think, I really pray for the kids in my class

RESEARCHER: good

PARTICIPANT: because I know that all of the kids are not as passionate as some of the others

RESEARCHER: uh huh

PARTICIPANT: and ummm

RESEARCHER: well, students pick universities for a lot of different reasons. You had your reasons for picking and other students have other reasons

PARTICIPANT: exactly

RESEARCHER: and it's not always because of the Christian environment that we offer—we know that.

PARTICIPANT: yeah. I, seriously, I, this class has been the purpose of my maturation and my walk with God during the semester

RESEARCHER: that's beautiful

INTERVIEW ENDED AT 6:40 PM

APPENDIX O:

EXTERNAL AUDITOR CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Project: "Exploring Spirituality in Christian Higher Education: How Does Studying the New Testament in a Required Bible Course at a Liberal-Arts Evangelical Christian University Contribute to Students' Spiritual Lives?"

While serving in the capacity of External Auditor for this project, I understand by the time I review the typed-written transcriptions of the interviews, personal narratives will have assigned aliases to maintain participant anonymity. However, because I teach at the university at which this study will take place, I recognize there is a remote possibility that I could possibly connect a story with a face.

Therefore, by signing this Confidentiality Agreement I acknowledge and agree:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including peers, friends, or family.
2. I will not in any way divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, or alter any confidential information except as properly authorized.
3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant's name is not used.
4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modifications, or purging of confidential information.
5. My obligations under this agreement will continue after the conclusion of this research project. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.

By signing this document, I acknowledge I have read the agreement and verify I will comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Printed Name of External Auditor Charles E. Stikes

Signature of External Auditor Charles E. Stikes

Date 02/05/08

APPENDIX P:

LETTER OF COOPERATION

February 4, 2008

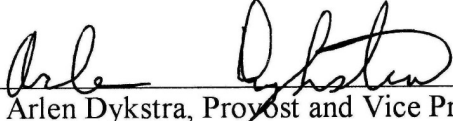
Mrs. Janet K. Puls, MSW, LCSW
335 Clayton Oaks Drive
Ellisville, MO 63011

Dear Mrs. Puls,

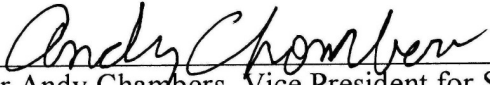
Based on our review of your research proposal, we give you permission to conduct the study entitled, "Exploring Spirituality in Christian Higher Education: How Does Studying the New Testament in a Required Bible Course at a Liberal-Arts Evangelical Christian University Contribute to Students' Spiritual Lives?" As part of this study, we authorize you to invite students enrolled in Dr. Chamber's spring 2008 New Testament History course to participate in one-on-one interviews for your study. We acknowledge their participation is strictly voluntary and at their own discretion. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study if at anytime our circumstances change.

It is our understanding that all data collected will remain entirely confidential and that you will not provide any data to anyone outside of the researcher, the designated research external auditor, and the research committee without permission from both the Missouri Baptist University IRB and Walden University IRB.

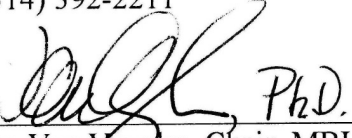
Sincerely,



Dr. Arlen Dykstra, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
(314) 392-2201



Dr Andy Chambers, Vice President for Student Development
Associate Professor of Bible
(314) 392-2211



Dr. Van Vaughn, Chair, MBU Institutional Review Board
Assistant Professor of Counselor Education / Human Services
(314) 392-2283

CURRICULUM VITAE

Janet K. Puls, MSW, LCSW

Education:

Ph.D. Academic Psychology, Clinical (expected February 2011)

Walden University, Minneapolis, MN

Dissertation: An Exploration of Spirituality in Christian Higher Education: How Studying the Old Testament in a Required Bible Course at a Liberal Arts Evangelical Christian University Affected Female Students Spiritually

Master in Social Work, 1999

Saint Louis University, St. Louis, MO

Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Sociology, 1997

Maryville University; St. Louis, MO

Professional Licensure:

State of Missouri: Licensed Clinical Social Worker

Professional Experience:

Missouri Baptist University, St. Louis, MO; 2000 to present

Assistant Professor of Psychology and Human Services

Chair, Social & Behavioral Sciences Division

- Manage curriculum, budgeting, and faculty

- Teach classes and advise students

Director of Institutional Research

- Oversee institutional research, reporting aggregate enrollment and demographic data for internal use, accrediting agencies, and college source publications

Bartholf & Associates Counseling Center, St. Louis, MO; 2000-2003

Therapist

- Therapy with children, adolescents, adults, and families

Mentor St. Louis, St. Louis, MO; 1999-2001

Executive Director

- Responsible for all operations of psychosocial educational school-based program

Clinical Practicum, St. Louis, MO; 1998-1999

- Saint Louis University - Family Clinic – Individual therapy with adults

- Kids in the Middle – Individual and group therapy with children

-Rockwood School District – school social work case management and student counseling

Life Skills Foundation, St. Louis, MO; 1996-1998
Program Manager for Individuals with developmental disabilities

Professional Memberships:

National Association of Social Workers – Missouri Chapter
President: July 2010 through June 2012
North American Association of Christians in Social Work
American Psychological Association of Graduate Students (APAGS)
The Society for the Teaching of Psychology (APA Division 2)
Psi Chi, National Honor Society in Psychology

Presentations:

National Association of Social Workers, Lake of the Ozarks, MO; March 2010
Social Work Ethics Take Center Stage
Missouri Baptist University, St. Louis, MO; January 2004
Student Assessment
Maryville University, St. Louis, MO; September 2003
The Influence of Servant-Leadership
National Association of Social Workers, Lake of the Ozarks, MO; March 2001
Advancing the administrative roles of social workers for tomorrow's social services
North American Association of Christians in Social Work, San Antonio, TX; Oct. 2001
Lend a hand to shape a future: Effective components of a K-5 school-based one-on-one mentoring program for faith-based initiatives
Danforth Foundation, St. Louis, MO; May 2001
Putting faith into action: Youth mentoring for at-risk children
Incarnate Word Foundation, St. Louis, MO; April 2000
Effective mentoring programs: Giving psychosocial and educational support for at-risk children

Publications:

Saint Louis University School of Social Service Alumni Newsletter, St. Louis, MO
Chief Editor, 2002-2006.

Cawthon, S. W., & Walden University's Online Lab (2006, May 4). National survey of accommodations and alternate assessments for students who are deaf or hard of hearing in the United States. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 11(3), 337-359.